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How One Evening's Study Led to a $30,000 Job

A Simple Method of Mind Training That Any One Can Follow with Results from the First Day

By a Man Who Made Formerly No More Than a Decent Living

I DO not take the credit to myself at all for attaining what my friends term a phenomenal success. It was all so simple that I believe any man can accomplish practically the same thing if he learns the secret.

It came about in a rather odd manner. I had been worrying along in about the same way as the average man thinking that I was doing my bit for the family by providing them with three square meals a day, when an old chum of mine, Frank Powers, suddenly blossomed out with every evidence of great prosperity.

Naturally the first thing I did when I noticed it was to congratulate him and ask him what had brought the evident change in his finances.

"Bill," he said, "it's all come so quickly I can hardly account for it myself. But the thing that has made such difference in my life lately began with an article I read a short time ago about training the mind.

"It compared the average person's mind to a leaky pail, losing its contents as it went along, which if carried any distance would arrive at its destination practically empty.

"The leak in the pail, the writer demonstrated, was forgetfulness. He showed that when memory fails, experience, the thing we all value most highly, is worthless. He proved to me that a man is only as good as his memory, and whatever progress he accomplishes can be laid directly to his powers of retaining in his mind the right things—the things that are going to be useful to him as he goes along.

"Well, I was convinced. My mind was a 'leaky pail.' I started in at once to make my memory efficient, taking up a memory training course which claimed to improve a man's memory in one evening. What you call my good fortune to-day I attribute solely to my exchanging a 'leaky pail' for a mind that retains the things I want to remember."

* * * * * *

Powers' story set me thinking. What kind of a memory did I have? It was much the same as that of other people, I supposed. Certainly it never occurred to me that it was possible or even desirable to improve it as I assumed that a good memory was a sort of natural gift.

But I began to observe myself more closely in my daily work. The frequency with which I had to refer to record or business papers concerning things that at some previous time had come under my particular notice amazed me. The men around me who were going about the same work as myself were no different than I in this regard. And this thought gave new significance to the fact that I had been performing practically the same subordinate duties at exactly the same salary for some three years.

The whole thing hit me pretty hard. I realized that probably hundreds of sales had been lost because the salesman forgot some selling point that would have closed the order. Many decisions involving thousands of dollars had been made unwisely because the man responsible didn't remember all the facts bearing on the situation and thus used poor judgment. There are no greater words in the English language descriptive of business inefficiency than the two little words, "I forgot."

I reached a decision. On the recommendation of Powers, I got in touch at once with the Independent Corporation which shortly before had published the David M. Roth Method of Memory Training. And then came the surprise of my life. Within thirty minutes after I had opened the book the secret that I had been in need of all my life was mine. Mr. Roth has boiled down the principles of perfecting the memory so that the method can almost be grasped at a glance. And the farther you follow the method the more accurate and reliable your memory becomes. Instead of study the whole thing seemed like a fascinating game.

The rest of my story is not an unusual one among American business men who have realized the value of a reliable trained memory. My income today is close to $30,000. It will reach that figure at the beginning of our next fiscal year. And two years ago I scarcely made what I now think of as a decent living. I can never be thankful enough that I mended that "leaky pail" and discovered the enormous possibilities of a really good memory.

David M. Roth

When Mr. Roth first determined to exchange his leaky mind for one that would retain anything he wanted it to, it was because he found his memory to be probably poorer than that of any man he knew. He could not remember a man's name 20 seconds. He forgot so many things that he was convinced he could never succeed until he learned to remember. Today there are over ten thousand people in the United States whom Mr. Roth has met at different times—most of them only once—whom he can instantly name on sight. Mr. Roth can and has hundreds of times at dinners and lectures asked fifty or sixty men he has never met to tell him their names, businesses and telephone numbers and then after turning his back while they changed seats, has picked each one out by name, told him his telephone number and business connection.

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Mr. Roth's fee for personal instruction to classes limited to fifty members is $1,000. But in order to secure nation-wide distribution for the Roth Memory Mail Course in a single season the publishers have put the price at only five dollars, a lower figure than any course of its kind has ever been sold before, and it contains the very same material in permanent form as is given in the personal $1,000 course.

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MID-APRIL ISSUE

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April 3 1919
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CARSON of TAOS

or

HOW KIT CARSON SERVED FRIEND AND FOE

A Complete Novelette

By Hugh Pendexter

Author of "When Kentucky Starved," "Go Ahead Davie," etc.

CHAPTER I

HOW DANE SPOILED A MAN'S LUCK

BRAYING lines of pack-mules bringing in the silver from the hand-worked mine a few miles distant, and discordant lines of jackasses, top-heavy with firewood at two-bits a load, congested the irregular streets of Santa Fé in the early Summer of 1838, just as they had for the last century or two, and formed the motif of the weird chorus which spelled life for the ancient town.

The decorative notes of this pictorial diapason were to be found in the jingling silver pieces on the gaming-tables, in jangling spurs worn by degenerate descendants of the haughty conquistadors as they strutted about the plaza, in the shrill treble of naked children and the staccato protest of dogs underfoot. For a subtle diminuendo, felt rather than heard, there was the hushed clink of gold being paid to rapacious officials in the Palacio del Gobernador—clipped to "Palace" by Americans—which took up the greater part of one side of the Plaza.

With the exception of a growing American influence conditions of the old town were the same as a hundred years back, before Mexico's cleavage from Spain and the shifting of the capital from Madrid to below the Rio Grande. West of the Mississippi there were three States, Missouri, Arkansas and Louisiana; all the remainder of the vast Western territory belonged to Mexico, or was in dispute between the United States and Great Britain. It was nine hundred miles, Indian-harassed and bandit-infested, to the Missouri River; it was over this hazardous trail that the civilization of the States must filter to the Mexicans. And but few of the first-comers were fit apostles of peace and gentleness.

The influx of Americans, however, was already weaving a new thread through the gaudy blanket of the vice and dirt and sloth and adobe houses of Santa Fé life. The town sprawled over a plateau, seven thousand feet above sea-level, but a stranger found it hard to credit such an elevation because of the towering mountains crowding around it. It was the center of a huge web of commerce, despite

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the lazy indifference of the Mexicans and their racial aversion to action. Pull a thread on the Klamath, and a tremor was registered among the traders of "The Holy Faith." Find fur thick and plenty along the Yellowstone, and the effect was soon felt behind counters in mud-brick stores.

From all points of the compass and along wild trails where adventure was born, and the Sisters Three daily spun and broke the thread of life, came silver and fur and goods. It was the home of carousal, and the game of barter and gambling and drinking and women went on interminably. It was the mecca for refugee and desperado, the resort for gambler and schemer, the rendezvous for trapper, hunter and Indian-fighter; it was the magnet which brought the creaking prairie schooners from the Missouri and the silver trains from the south and west.

To Ellery Dane, twenty-odd years old and freshly arrived and still carrying his heavy sea tan, it was marvelously attractive and repelling. He had wandered much about the carelessly winding streets, but always returned to the Plaza, where throbbed the feverish heart of the city. The clamor radiating from bailies, or fandangoes, the loud voices of English-speaking men in liquor, the clinking of coins in the gambling-hall opening on to the square, the flitting about of dark women in their gaudy petticoats, the flowing scarf, or *rebozo*, scantily concealing arms and breasts, all held his startled attention; and this despite the fact his errand in town was a grave one and his uneasiness of spirit great.

He lounged much before the Palace, or in front of the Capilla de los Soldados, the military chapel, on the opposite side of the square. Even in his worriment he found the former 'dobe structure with its rough pine pillars fascinating him because of what it concealed. There Zebulon M. Pike, stanch American and early explorer, had been a prisoner twenty-nine years ago. In that low, grim residence of the Spanish captain-general many a tragedy had been enacted; for he was accountable in theory only to the viceroy in Mexico City and sent prisoners to death or torture as the whim possessed him, or hate incited.

All military plans for defense and offense were hatched within the Palace, with its machinery smoothly running long before the first Fourth of July. Historic annals of priceless worth were stored under that leaky roof; and did one penetrate the narrow cells he might find bones dangling in rusty chains, and human hair stuffed in crevices, surmounted by crosses traced in the masonry.

Dane was aroused from his musings by a loud chorus of, "*Los Americanos! La entrada de la caravana!*" And before he could completely rally his senses a rabble of men, women and children, with an undercurrent of yapping curs, swept by him. From the shops bustled forth keen-eyed traders, mostly Americans. Carried along by the mob he beheld a procession of freight-wagons rolling down the narrow streets, the vicious mules braying reply to the excited greetings of the populace.

Ahead rode a slight yet compactly-formed man, who leaped from his horse and worked his way through the mob before Dane had more than glimpsed him. Mules, wagons, teamsters and fighting escort were caked with dust. In the top of one wagon stuck several arrows, whimsically left there by the train crew as eloquent testimony of the stirring times back-along.

Shaggy mountain-men, recently arrived with thousands of pounds of beaver, worth ten dollars a pound, and now empty of pouch from drink and play, waved their ragged skin hats and yelled raucously, as though the caravan had brought them new fortunes. Mexicans in leather breeches, tight at the hips and flaring open from the knee down, gesticulated and jabbered.

"Bent's trains allers git through," drawled a shopkeeper, whose lean jaw and nasal tones suggested New England.

The man addressed no one in particular, simply paying tribute to the great trader and proprietor of Bent's Fort on the upper Arkansas.

The words caused Dane's curiosity to change to sharp attention, and he began threading his way through the mob. He was looking for a certain man and he believed he would recognize him on sight. He ignored the teamsters, the hunters and the rag and bob-tail of the crew; then saw a tall, broad-shouldered man leaving the rear of the train making his way toward a combination eating, drinking, and gaming house. A mule, possessed of nine devils, let loose with his hoofs and the crowd fell back.

Through the narrow avenue Dane observed the big fellow's buckskin garments were newer and fresher than those of his mates, while certain bead decorations and a wealth of fringe bespoke pride, or vanity, in dress. The man's bulk allowed him quick passage through the mass, and by the time Dane commenced following him he lost him; for now other long-limbed Americans were thick before the military chapel, and the newcomer's height no longer distinguished him.

Dane finally gained the chapel and spent some time investigating tall, powerfully-built men. He was unsuccessful but not discouraged, as he knew all life of the town drifted continually back and forth across the Plaza. Working slowly he commenced a methodical search of the fifteen-odd shops, the majority of which were wholesale establishments kept by dealers from the States. After exhausting these he turned to the long rambling, one-story structure, which catered to the three appetites of the borderer, food, drink and gambling.

Here he found his quarry, his huge bulk sprawled out before a monte-table, his bold hawk-like features presenting a striking profile as he watched the game. As Dane studied him his own face took on a shade of disappointment.

"I expected perfection and forgot a man responds to his environment," he told himself, edging forward and colliding with a drunken Ute Indian.

It required some minutes for him to fully make up his mind, undecided whether to speak now or await a more propitious time. But his business was urgent, so he advanced until he stood behind the giant. Before he could open his mouth the big man lost the silver before him and violently pounded the table, and roared:

"—— the luck! Lost ag'in!"

"*Si, señor*," politely agreed the Mexican.

"None of yer —— palaver, ye brown dawg!" thundered the loser, wagging his bearded face over the table.

THE Mexican smelled danger, and lifted his eyes to stare fixedly at Dane standing close behind the wrathful gambler. As was intended this steady gaze caused the big man to turn his head. Instantly he found a new object for his rage. Springing to his feet he growled:

"What d'ye mean, ye rat? What d'ye mean by comin' a snoopin' 'round an' sp'ilin' my luck? What d'ye mean by crossin' my medicine?"

"I was looking for some one. I thought you were the man," coldly replied Dane, little ugly lights glinting in his dark eyes.

"So ye've been trailin' me, eh? Well, ye've found me. Ye've sp'iled my luck. We'll see how much of a trade ye make in trailin' me," cried the big man.

"You are not the man I want, even if you are the man I started out to find. I'm sorry I came in here. Now I'll be going," replied Dane.

"Oh, ho!" jeered the other, glancing about to make sure he had the undivided attention of the room. "I'm not the man ye wanted to find arter all, eh? Son, ye spoke true there. I'm a —— poor man to go huntin' for." Then with a fresh accession of wrath he bawled: "So, ye'll come trailin' me, an' bullin' in an' queerin' my luck, will ye? An' ye'll speak real perlite an' quit an' sneak off arter ye've done yer dirty work, eh?"

And having worked himself up into a rare rage the giant took a step nearer.

Dane, disgusted that his quest should have such a vulgar ending, jerked his head toward the table, saying—

"Maybe your luck will return after I'm gone."

With that he would have turned away, but the big man misconstrued his words as evidence of weakness, and caught him violently by the shoulder and spun him about, the roughness of the act bringing a shout of laughter from the spectators.

"Ye scum! Ye'll stick here till I tell ye to go. Then ye'll go on the toe of my moccasin!" cried the big man.

"The devil I will, you dirty swab!" gritted Dane, recovering his balance and smashing his fist into his opponent's bull neck.

The blow sent the man staggering against the monte-table, crashing it to the floor. The spectators leaped back and took points of vantage to enjoy the finale. Some one on the outskirts of the crowd yelped:

"Run, you fool! Want to be murdered?"

But Dane, now thoroughly incensed, stood his ground, his fist clenched, balanced on his toes like a boxer. The bully straightened up and rubbed his throat and shook his head to restore his breathing. And he

smiled wolfishly as he noted the young man's belligerent attitude.

"For God's sake, some one toss him a gun! He'll be murdered!" yelled the friendly voice from the background.

Without turning his head the big man gasped—

"I'll settle with ye later, my man." Then with a jerk he pulled a butcher-knife from his belt and staring with the gaze of a killer at Dane hoarsely promised: "Ye're goin' to lose both ears. Hear me? One for sp'ilin' my luck. One for raisin' yer fist ag'in me. An' if ye show any more fight I'll split yer heart."

Dane knew he must act quickly, or be killed, and believing in the theory of always carrying the fight to the enemy he suddenly kicked out at the hand holding the knife, intending to follow it up with a rush. But despite his bulk the big man was quick as a cat, and with his left hand caught the outstretched leg. Throwing back his head he laughed long and contentedly at the spectacle of his victim helpless and hard-put to maintain his balance on one foot. Sinking his fingers cruelly into Dane's flesh he raised the knife like a cleaver and slowly warned:

"Left ear furst. Try to dodge an' I'll split yer head."

Frantic with rage and fear Dane began hopping convulsively about to avoid the knife, and desperately pleading—

"Won't some one throw me a weapon?"

"If any one does I'll cut his throat," warned the big man, his evil eyes sweeping the tense faces of the onlookers. "Now son, stand steady an' take yer medicine."

As he spoke he yanked Dane toward him, and at the same moment the crowd between the two and the door suddenly parted and down the aisle came a man, who was slight of build, a bit below medium height, but broad of shoulders and deep-chested. His blue eyes seem to spit sparks as he took in the savage scene. The big man stood with his back to the newcomer, but Dane recognized him as the man he had glimpsed riding at the head of Bent's train.

"Throw me a gun—a knife—anything!" he gasped appealingly, not daring to expect direct aid from the stranger.

The bully believed this was a subterfuge to distract his attention, and with a snarl he mimicked:

"Throw me a knife or a gun! I'll throw ye a knife, —— ye for a white-livered luck-sp'iler."

And the heavy knife would have dealt mutilation or death had not the newcomer raised a long-barreled dragoon pistol and fired, shooting the murderous blade from the giant's hand.

Down crashed Dane, with the bully falling on top of him, while pandemonium filled the hall, English and Spanish voices beating dully on the young sailor's ears. He was conscious of the weight of the bully's body being removed from his chest, and heard some one yell—

"There he goes!"

And lifting his head he beheld his assailant vaulting through the hole that, minus glass, served as window.

The babel about him continued, but stunned and confused he sensed none of it. He felt himself led outdoors, but not until down a narrow street and some distance from the Plaza did he get himself together. The stranger was at his side, a hand under his elbow, and the smile of sympathy on his placid face was very pleasant to see.

"I'll go and get my pistol," were Dane's first words.

"After you get it you'd better keep away from such men," gently advised the stranger.

"Good Lord! Don't you think for a minute I wanted his company after I saw what he was," cried Dane. "I'm new to this town. Just in a few days ago over the Old Spanish Trail from Monterey, where I left my ship. I'm mate—or was—of the *Atlantic Queen*. Got a chance to come with a trader. Expected to find some one here. Awfully cut up when I didn't. I'd been told of a man who might help me with advice. Went to Taos to find him. He wasn't there. Then I come back here to learn he might come in with a wagon-train. My business can't wait, but I did anchor here for two days, taking a chance. You've done me a mighty good turn. If ever I can repay you——"

"You owe me nothing. If I can be of further service——"

"That's mighty kind of you. But you've done enough for me. I'll be on my guard next time. Now I'll just thank you again and be going, as my errand is one of life or death."

"If you need help and it's in my power—" earnestly began the stranger.

"—— it, but you're a man! I'll always remember I met one white man in this rotten spot. But my trouble is a mighty serious one. You won't feel hurt when I say that there's only one man who would fill the bill, and I've missed him. I must get on his track at once, or go it alone."

"Then you must let me help you find him. I'm quite well acquainted 'round these parts, and you're a stranger."

"That's right! I'm still stupid from my fall. If you can help me find Carson of Taos I'll be eternally in your favor a second time."

"What?"

"Carson of Taos. Man named Fraser, who keeps store here for Mr. Young, told me he was hired at Bent's Fort as a hunter, but that he had heard he was at Taos. Up there they told me a Mexican runner came in with word that the Apaches were on the war-path and that Mr. Carson was expected to guard a wagon-train to Santa Fé. Oh, Lord! What a blithering idiot I am! You rode at the head of the train. You can tell me if Mr. Carson was with it."

"You've met Carson," was the quiet reply.

"Never saw him in my life. Heard heaps about him, though. Every white man you find on the South American coast has heard about him."

"I say you've met Carson," repeated the stranger, his eyes twinkling merrily.

"How?"

"You're talking to him now."

"Good heavens! You Carson of Taos?" gasped Dane, incredulous as he stared at the slight figure beside him.

"Here! Let's sit down for a bit while you get your nerve back."

And drawing the dazed young man down beside him on the sill of a doorway he fished out a package of papers from inside his buckskin shirt and selected one that was worn and stained by time and travel.

"I've always kept it," he apologetically informed as he gave it to Dane to read. "It's from the *Missouri Intelligencer*, published at Franklin on the Missouri. The date is October 12, 1826. Franklin is the end of the Santa Fé Trail."

Thoroughly bewildered, Dane spread out the clipping and read:

Notice is hereby given to all persons that Christopher Carson, a boy about sixteen years old, small for his age, but thick-set, with light hair, ran away from the subscriber, living in Franklin, Howard County, Missouri, to whom he had been bound to learn the saddler's trade, on or about the first of September last. He is supposed to have made his way to the upper part of the State. All persons are notified not to harbor, support or assist said boy, under penalty of the law. One cent reward will be given to any person who will bring back the said boy. (Signed) DAVID WORKMAN.

As Dane finished and stared with lips parted at the famous frontiersman Carson explained:

"When any one talks tall about Kit Carson I like to have this handy to read over. It keeps me from getting proud."

He laughed contentedly.

"By the great North Star! You Kit Carson, who has made so many Indians run?" exploded Dane.

CARSON'S face grew a bit grave, his modesty finding flattery distasteful, as he slowly admitted:

"Yes; I've made some Indians run. But much of the time they were running after me. But I am proud to know I came from a neck of the woods where Daniel Boone spent his last days." And could he have read the future he also would have been proud that he was born within seventy-five miles of Abraham Lincoln's birthplace, the two events coming ten months apart. "When I quit making saddles to ride them it was to join my first wagon-train, coming here to Santa Fé. I've roamed much since then, but the Taos Valley seems most like home to me, and I shall some time settle down at Taos. Now why did 'Hob' Danks bother you in the gambling-hall?"

Dane's mask of tan could not hide the red shame stirring his blood as he groaned—

"I went up to him, thinking he was you."

For several moments Carson chuckled in deepest amusement.

"I could see he was hotly objecting to something." Then, although only a few years Dane's senior, his manner became parental; and he encouraged: "Suppose we pass on to your trouble. That is, if you care to tell it to a man for whose return only one cent reward will be paid."

By this time Dane was quite idolatrous in his demeanor. Expecting to find a giant in physique, with all the brawny machinery for crushing legions of Indians, he had been astounded to discover the prince of frontiersmen in this slim, quiet-spoken, modest man. But as reaction set in Carson began

to change before his fascinated gaze and to take on all those attributes that fancy had pictured.

He was convinced that this man, who was destined to find trails for the Pathfinder and who within eight years would be guiding General Stephen W. Kearny's Army of the West to California, was old in wisdom and was as kindly of heart as he was wise. With a boyish frankness that could not fail to enlist Carson's sympathies he began:

"I was the happiest man in the world when I landed in Monterey. I expected that Blanche—Miss West—would be waiting for me. My first voyage was under her uncle, Cap'n David West. He retired from the sea some years ago. You understand they were expecting me. It was all arranged, you know. Blanche—Miss West——"

"She isn't your sister. I understand," solemnly assured Carson, his lips twitching.

"All right. Well, it fairly scuttled me to find them gone. Then an old *padre* brought me a letter from Blanche. Here it is. You can understand everything better if you—if I read it to you."

Carson nodded and hooked his hands over his knees and waited. Dane smoothed out the communication and skipping the preliminary passages read the remainder which ran:

"So you see if your ship arrives on time you'll only be a few days behind us and can overtake us. I fear that uncle's mind is affected, Ellery, but there is no changing him. It's impossible to let him set off alone. When I beg him to wait till you come he simply growls:

"'Avast, lass! It's up anchor at once. I've sailed all the water there is and never overhauled any treasure yet. Little I figured on making such a cruise without a good quarter-deck under my heels, but as it is so, so will I accept it.'

"Just how and where he got the story that starts us off into the wild I don't know. He's childishly secretive from me, and yet babbles so a stranger would guess the truth after talking with him a few minutes. He is helpless when he gets out of sight of blue water. In some way he has come into possession of a paper that pretends to show where more than a hundred thousand dollars worth of gold and silver bullion are buried in the northern part of Texas on the Canadian River. We do not need the money, but nothing will stop him from going after it.

"I don't know who first owned the treasure—if there is any—but he firmly believes it is there. He doesn't want me to go along and insists I stay here and wait for you. I hate to go, but I can't let him go alone. And I know you'll overtake us. As we are to travel to Santa Fe with Mr. Ewing Young, the well-known trader, following the Old Spanish Trail I'm not fearing any dangers. Mr. Young doesn't know our business and uncle has repeatedly forbidden me to tell it.

"He made me promise on his old ship's Bible before he would consent for me to go with him. I wish he did know as he is a very upright, honorable man and could advise me. But in talking with him he has spoken frequently of Christopher Carson, of Taos, some eighty miles north of Santa Fé, and always speaks of him with the greatest praise. Of course every one has heard of Kit Carson——"

"Skip everything but the facts, suggested Carson uneasily.

"'And he'—umph—'so well-known.' Ah, here we are.

"If you fail to overtake us seek Mr. Carson and get his advice. I haven't any idea how uncle plans to arrange for the rest of the trip after reaching Santa Fé. Uncle is taking quite a sum of gold with him. As ever with——"

"I see," mused Carson, as Dane halted and reddened. "When did they arrive here and when did they leave?"

"They came in two weeks ago. My ship was overdue and I was hopelessly behind them. Mr. Young has gone to the copper mines on the Rio Gila; so I didn't see him. But his man Fraser says there was an old man and a girl in the party. I've overhauled the town since I came but couldn't find out when or with whom they went. Just dropped from sight."

Carson rose and pursed his lips thoughtfully.

"If you could advise me," wistfully began Dane.

"You don't need advice. You need help," bruskly informed Carson. "The whole business looks bad. A foolish old man, knowing nothing of the dangers that begin to surround him even before he leaves Santa Fé, and sure to set people guessing by his mysterious talk, got the scum of this town trailing him before he'd passed a night here. If he had told my old friend, Young, what he planned doing he never would have been allowed to start without an honest escort. Queer how he heard that story out on the coast."

"Nothing to it, of course."

"No hundred thousand dollars to it. Something in the neighborhood of fifty thousand if the Indians haven't found it all. Five years ago the Kiowas, led by Lame-Old-Man, attacked a small train close to the South Canadian in the Panhandle. Several of the Americans were

killed and the Kiowas lost Gui-kongya—Black Wolf. The Americans, mostly Missourians, were some distance from the regular trail to avoid war-parties. Lame-Old-Man told me afterwards that his warriors were mightily surprized to come across a train out there.

"The surviving Americans fought their way to the North Canadian with the redskins at their heels. They had their silver—there was no gold—in specie, loaded on mules. On the North Canadian they realized they couldn't take the silver with them. So they cached it and made a running fight. Most of them were killed. What survivors managed to reach the States wouldn't come back for the silver if there had been millions of it. Nor could any of them tell just where they cached it, being new to the country.

"The Kiowas found a small portion of the money. It was the first they had ever seen. They didn't know what it was; so they beat it out thin and wore it in their scalp-locks. They called it *adalhangya*—'hair metal.' That's their name for money today. Perhaps the rest of it is still there, but Cap'n West won't bring it back, even if he finds it. We'll go back to the Plaza and I'll look up Hob Danks."

"The man who wanted to slice off my ears! I'll get a knife and a gun from my dunnage-bag in Young's store!"

Carson smothered a smile at his earnestness, and reminded:

"When you bother to pack weapons this is a good place to have them handy. Danks won't bother you any more. He's a rascal, but too lazy to stick to villainy long. He joined my train at the crossing of the Cimarron Chico, a bit north of here. Said he had started for Bent's alone and got scared of the Indians. I have a notion he started with the West Party, but got hold of some money and quit to come back here to drink and gamble. Lives with a Mexican woman. Probably jealous of her. Anyway, I'll have the truth out of him. I'll also talk with the dealers; for West had to outfit somewhere."

"I know they are in horrible danger. Set me on the trail that leads to the Canadian and I'll never forget your kindness," cried Dane.

"I reckon his escort will treat him and the young lady all right until they either get hold of the paper that shows where the silver is cached, or know they have arrived at the spot. I'll not only put you on the trail, but I'll go with you."

"I never can pay you back——"

"Then how foolish it would be to try," hurriedly broke in Carson. With a whimsical smile he added: "I know from the letter that your first name is Ellery. Might I ask the rest of it?"

CHAPTER II

HOW CARSON OF TAOS GOT THE TRUTH

PROCEEDING to Young's store Carson explained enough concerning the Wests to evidence it was of the utmost importance that he trace them at once.

"Mighty sorry, but I can't help you, Kit," regretted Fraser. "I've told Mr. Dane all I know. When Young and his party pulled in he mentioned having an old man and a woman with him. But he never reckoned they were going any farther and didn't bother his head with them. I didn't even get a glimpse of them. No party has outfitted here. Maybe Blake can tell you something."

Carson thanked him, and, turning to Dane, advised:

"I've got to do considerable running around, fixing it with the wagon-boss to take the supplies back to Bent's, and such like. You'd better stay here with Fraser and take it easy. I'll ask what questions are necessary."

"Meaning I'd only be in the way," said Dane with a grimace. "I admit it. But it seems a shame to shoulder my troubles on you. I'll be here, waiting."

Carson nodded and passed out on the Plaza and hunted up Blake in the back of his shop. After a warm greeting he briefly announced:

"It's very important that I find the trail of an elderly man, a Cap'n West, sailor, and his niece. Came from the coast with Young's party, and have since disappeared. They outfitted for the States, paying in gold."

"No one of that name and description has outfitted here," promptly replied Blake. "Only one call since Young came in, as the Injun scare is keeping every one hived up. Apache, Comanche and Kiowa have taken the path. And the one call I had was from 'Young Mexico.' He paid gold or I wouldn't have done business with him."

Carson frowned at the name and muttered—

"Thought that whelp was down Chihuahua way for good."

"Nope; he's back. He's bad, Kit; mighty bad. A boy in years and the devil himself in cussedness. If it hadn't been for hoping he'd run into the Apaches I'd hate to sell him a thing. Of course to refuse would mean a killing for him or me. His man, 'One-Eyed' Jacks, bought three saddles, four rifles, and a lot of ammunition. He figured on you being at Bent's, or he wouldn't have come."

"Do you know if he bought any horses?"

"No; if he did he must have picked them up from Elvez. Oh, Kit; have you heard the yarn about 'Red Jaguar' coming back to life?"

Carson started as if stung, and stayed his steps, his blue eyes very wide.

"Red Jaguar?" he softly repeated. "It can't be. Must be just a story. Why, Wiltson, the Yankee trapper, brought his head into Rio Arriba six months ago; and the boys chipped him twenty quills of gold-dust as a reward."

"Still they say he's back. The peons are whispering it. There's a drunken Ute in town today who says he saw him up in the Sangre de Cristo range. Wiltson probably thought he had the Jaguar's head, but no one identified it for sure. It had been bumped 'round in a gunny-sack till it might have been any greaser's toppiece."

Carson whistled softly.

"If he's alive he's holed up in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, all right. Young Mexico, warned to keep away from here, rides up from Chihuahua. If the Jaguar's alive he's got his old spy system working here. I wouldn't be surprized if Young Mexico's coming is hitched up with the Jaguar's return to life—if he is alive. No, no, Blake. I don't believe it. The man's dead."

Quitting the store he hurried on till he came upon Elvez, an ancient Mexican horse-trader, lounging on the Plaza, absorbed in watching some men and women gambling for meager stakes on a filthy blanket. Carson touched the old man's arm and passed on. When he halted in the shadow of the military chapel Elvez was at his elbow, his black eyes dumbly adoring like those of a faithful dog.

"Señor Elvez, you are my friend?" asked Carson in Spanish.

"To the death, Señor Carson," quickly answered the old man.

"Then you shall tell me things. An old man, red of face and loud of voice, and a young woman, very beautiful, *Americanos*, were here two weeks ago and are gone. What do you know?"

"By all the holy saints I know nothing, Señor Carson. Would that I did! I have never forgotten when you saved my life——"

"That is all finished with. Who has bought horses of you within two weeks?"

"It will never be finished so long as I breathe and can do you a service. I have sold horses to Mexicans of my acquaintance, bound for El Paso. To *los* Yankees, bound for the copper mines. To a one-eyed man, going to trap on the upper waters of the Arkansas."

"How many to the one-eyed man?"

"Three."

"He paid you in gold?"

"*Si.*"

"And that is all you know?"

"About horses, *si*. But the one-eyed man bought a wagon, a covered one."

"A wagon! Of course. It all fits in! A wagon for West and the girl! Señor Elvez, he bought them for Young Mexico."

Elvez snarled like an old wildcat, and hissed—

"May he and his master roast in hell!"

"Softly, softly," warned Carson. "Have you not heard the story that Red Jaguar is back in life? There may be spies about."

"God bless us and save us!" croaked Elvez, shrinking against the wall of the chapel and glaring fearfully about him. "The Jaguar once said he would cut my heart out. I hid my granddaughter where he could not get her. The Jaguar alive! *Carajo!* I got drunk like *los Americanos* when I heard he was dead."

Carson's warning that he hold his tongue was quite needless. When he left Carson it was to seek a hiding-place. Thus far the frontiersman had scored one success. He had satisfied himself One-Eyed Jacks had bought the wagon for the accommodation of the Wests and that Young Mexico, a border incorrigible, was employed to safeguard the two innocents. Now to learn which way they went, for he was convinced

the truth was somewhere in Santa Fé and he purposed to find it.

It was characteristic of him to give gladly of his time and wisdom to erase another's troubles. That he had never seen young Dane before this day made no difference. To Carson an honest man in trouble was never a stranger and a woman in peril was always to be succored. For several years, or ever since he realized the beaver trade was falling off because some one in the States had discovered an excellent substitute for making hats, he had served as hunter at Bent's Fort.

His was the daily task to supply forty men with meat by means of his rifle. He had become the greatest hunter the Rocky Mountains ever saw, and so kindly were his relations with the partners, the Bents and St. Vrain, he felt free to follow his inclination and take his time before returning to resume his duties. From a teamster on the Plaza he learned the wagon-boss was in the eating-house. Repairing there he found him, but not eating.

"You will go back without me," he briefly announced. "It may be some time before I can come to the fort. The supplies are ready for you. Keep the men close and sober."

"They allers count on a little fling," remonstrated the boss, who already reeked of rum.

"Very well; go your own trail. But Red Jaguar, they say, is back in the Sangre de Cristo."

"Gawdamighty! Reckon I've had enough. I'll shove along an' tell the men. Reckon they'll be keen to start back to onct—an' go dry till we hit the fort."

Having performed this duty for his employers Carson turned from the Plaza and rapidly traversed several twisted streets until he came to a mud hovel at the end of a thoroughfare that led to the Alameda, or boulevard, on top of a sand-hill. Entering this he stood in silence while a withered crone pushed the hair from her snaky eyes and glared at him.

Then her face lighted up as she recognized him, and she crossed herself, and reverently mumbled—

"Señor Carson!"

"Señora Morador, I saved your daughter from the Jaguar when he thought he had her fast," he laconically reminded. "There is a big *Americano*, Hob Danks, in Santa Fé, living with a Mexican woman. I would know where he is. I will wait word at Señor Young's store. Be prompt."

With that he stepped through the low door. Before he had gone two rods he heard a shrill, persistent whistle, and he smiled as he observed half-naked street gamins coming from all directions.

He found Dane feverishly impatient. The young man was on his feet and demanding action the moment the frontiersman entered.

"I have learned much, but not enough," was Carson's evasive answer. "Soon I shall find Hob Danks. I hope to learn the truth from him."

"The truth from that beast!" exclaimed Dane incredulously.

"It is in him. I believe I can get it out."

And with Indian patience Carson seated himself on a bale of buffalo robes to wait.

A TUMULT of violence harrassed the Santa Fé Trail from its eastern to its western terminus. Desperados from the Republic of Texas were constantly preying on Mexican freight and silver trains. Mexican bandits were attacking indiscriminately, while the Indians impartially made war on outlaws and honest men. None understood the dangerous plight of the Wests better than Carson, but he told none of his fears to the hot-headed sailor.

The minutes grew into an hour and still the frontiersman's clear-cut features remained calm and placid. Dane did much stamping back and forth, snapping his fingers and exclaiming aloud as fear worried his soul. Suddenly Carson rose and glided to the door. A small Mexican boy, attired in a rag of a shirt, gazed at him shrewdly and jerked his head. Carson dropped a coin into the grimy paw and nodded.

Without a word the gamin wheeled and fluttered across the treeless, grassless Plaza. Carson stood his rifle in against the counter and waved Dane back and set out after his nimble guide. Down one street and up another the boy sped on. At last he slacked his pace, and as Carson drew up pointed to a mud-brick house.

"You are sure?" Carson demanded in faultless Spanish.

"The pig of a *Americano* is there," hissed the youngster, spitting in disgust.

Carson dismissed him and sought to enter

the passageway that led to the open court inside. The entrance was barricaded. He struck it lightly with his fist and a shrill voice fiercely demanded to know who he was and what he wanted.

"Open the door, little one," softly replied Carson, advancing a foot.

"The big *Americano* is mad with jealousy. He will kill you if you wake him," warned the woman, yet removing the bar and opening the door a few inches.

Carson thrust his foot through the opening and gently pushed it back. The woman, naked except for the gaudy petticoat and head-scarf, glared at him in a combination of anger, amazement and admiration.

"*Americano!*" she faltered. "Go away! Go away! He has been drinking. He is very jealous. He will kill you with his big knife."

Brushing her aside Carson pushed forward and entered the court and halted before a couch of hides, on which reposed the huge bulk of Danks. The woman's teeth clicked with fear as the frontiersman coolly stirred the inert mass with his foot and harshly commanded in English—

"Get up!"

Danks groaned and growled and tossed his arms about and slowly opened his bloodshot eyes. He blinked owlishly for a moment, then realized it was no illusion. An intruder had interrupted his drunken slumbers, had been talking with his woman. With a deep bellow of anger he crawled to his feet and pulled his butcher-knife from under the couch. Carson caught his wrist and with a twist that brought a grunt of pain wrenched the knife away, and was pressing the point of it against the bully's throat before the latter was thoroughly awake.

"Where is the old man and the girl who are called West?" he asked.

"What'n —— be ye talkin' 'bout, Mister Carson?" cried Danks, now standing very quiet as he recognized his visitor.

"Again I ask you where is Cap'n West and his niece?"

"An' I tell ye I don't know what ye're talkin' 'bout."

"That is bad for you. This is the last time I shall ask you." Then over his shoulder in Spanish: "I am asking your man to tell me something. It is the last time I shall ask him."

"Mother of God! Tell the truth, or he will kill you!" shrieked the woman.

Carson clapped his left hand tightly on the bully's limp shoulder and half-closed his eyes and tightened his grip on the knife, and slowly demanded—

"Where is Cap'n West and his niece?"

Danks' knees grew wobbly. The sweat streamed down his inflamed face and his red eyes stared helplessly toward the weeping woman. Slowly shifting his gaze till he met the implacable blue eyes boring into his rat of a soul, he panted—

"They're on the Trail, makin' for the States."

"I did not meet them coming from Bent's," warned Carson.

"They switched off at Vermejo River to take the outside road."

"You went with them as far as Vermejo and beat back to the Chico. Don't lie and die."

Danks wet his parched lips and confessed—

"I did."

"Why did you come back here?"

The bully hesitated, felt the prick of the knife, and hurriedly explained:

"The old man, Cap'n West, had some gold. I got hold of a few pieces. I'm tryin' to live honest, Mister Carson. So I quit 'em at night an' hid up till they was on their way. Then I come back to the Chico. While restin' there I see yer dust an' waited, not hankerin' to come back alone with the 'Paches on the rampage."

"Young Mexico is in charge of the party. They have one wagon for West and his niece?"

The query was punctuated with a sharp prick and Danks nodded. Then defended:

"Cap'n West hired Mexico to see him through. Nawthin' wrong in that. If ye want fightin'-men to fight for ye then ye must be blind to their leetle faults."

"Did you understand they were to follow the Trail the whole way to the Missouri?"

Danks' expression of surprize was obviously genuine.

"On course. How else would they make the Missouri," he retorted; and Carson knew the bully was not in the secret of the hidden treasure.

"One more question—and be very careful. Is Red Jaguar alive?"

With a squeal of abject fear Danks

dropped on the pile of hides, regardless of the knife, and hoarsely begged:

"For Gawd's sake don't ask me that! I'm good as dead, with my throat ripped from ear to ear, if it's known that ye even asked it."

"I'll let you off from that one," quietly replied Carson. "You've answered it already. If you've lied to me in any way there isn't room enough west of the Mississippi for you to hide in. Remember."

He was turning to go but Danks detained him by staggering to his feet and whispering:

"Wait. Wait a minute. Ye didn't ask for it, but I'll say this much. The old man is packin' quite a bit of gold. The gang knows it. I pouched some from his wagon an' lit out. It wa'n't more'n I'd have got if I'd stuck. But if anything happens to him an' the gal atween here an' the Missoury, don't hold it ag'in me."

"You dog!" gritted Carson, his eyes becoming terrible. "You knew murder was plotted, and you stole and ran, leaving that girl and old man to die. And you reckon that squares you with decent men. Danks, if any harm comes to either of them I shall kill you."

Carson left him bleating his innocence. The woman followed him to the door, her dark eyes glittering with mischief—but not for the frontiersman.

"He is a big pig; not brave like you, Señor Carson. Say the word, and while he sleeps I will steal his knife——"

"And hang for it," bruskly completed Carson, closing the outer door upon her.

He knew he had learned all that the bully knew. Had Danks surmised the expedition was after treasure instead of Captain West's gold he might not have deserted the band at the Vermejo. A bully and a beast, he was only on the outer fringe of young Mexico's cunningly planned rascalities.

HASTENING to Young's store Carson curtly announced:

"You can have plenty of action now, Mr. Dane. Take your rifle, pistols and blankets and get your horse. Join me at the wagon-train immediately. If you lack horse or weapons I'll outfit you at the wagons. We ride at once."

"You've learned something important?" anxiously asked Dane, ripping open his luggage.

"Your friends are traveling in a wagon under the escort of Young Mexico, a thorough villain. But they will move slowly because of the wagon. We must overtake them. We haven't time to organize a large band. The moment we started doing that some of Mexico's spies, or the spies of one who gives orders to Mexico, would be riding at top speed to warn the outlaws. We must go it alone and trust to luck."

"Then why are we standing here?" lamented Dane, oblivious to the fact that it was he who had tarried.

Carson led the way, eager as his companion to be mounted and off, but in passing the gambling-hall he came to an abrupt halt, and Dane, crowding his heels, bumped into him violently.

"I thought we were in great haste," complained Dane.

Carson gestured for him to be silent and drew up to the window. A voice had arrested the frontiersman's hurried steps. It was a loud, bellowing voice, yet streaked at times with a peculiar whining, nasal note. And as it ceased speaking there came a roar of laughter.

"So much is at stake!" protested Dane.

Without heeding him Carson thrust head and shoulders through one of the windows and beheld the owner of the voice standing on a table, exhilarated by his potations, yet blending a certain ludicrous gravity with his hilarious assertions, and the finished effect delighted his hearers.

In a deep, throaty voice he resumed:

"You can laugh at my warning, brethren, but when you're roasting in hell you'll wish you'd taken my advice. I tell you I've come down from the mountings to save you from your sins. I heard of your carryings-ons way up on the South Fork of the Republican. I heard again after making the Medicine Bow Mountings. And I quit my Injuns, my traps and my comfortable lodge to come here and tell you what o'n'ery, low-down cusses you be. Now while we are having another drink I'm going to explain to you just why you are damned."

"Drinks! Drinks!" roared the crowd.

Carson reached his rifle through the window and gave the orator a vicious poke in the back. With a growl of rage

the man faced about, blinked at the face framed in the window, then relaxed as a broad smile of joy spread over his bearded countenance. With a wild whoop he sprang from his perch, loudly yelling:

"Kit Carson, by the eternal! I'd know his hide if it was made into a saddle! Whee! Wait a minute, boy!"

And regardless of feet and shins he snatched up his rifle and ran for the door.

Dane, who had watched the scene in amazement, had not finished gaping when the stranger was shaking Carson by both hands and all but embracing him.

"If you only liked rum, Kit, what a time we'd have!" he lamented.

Carson finally managed to say—

"Mr. Dane, shake with Mr. William Williams, who rides with us to the North Canadian."

"Old Bill Williams. 'Parson' Williams. 'Old Pap' Williams. Missoury bred. Once a preacher back there. Boy, I'm glad to press your flesh. Howdy!"

"Now this is fine," rejoiced Carson, hooking into Williams' arm and leading him toward the wagon-train. "I couldn't ask for a better man."

Williams glanced at him musingly, and scratched his chin. In a weak voice he reminded:

"You was speaking something about riding some time to somewhere. That last drink went to my head, I reckon."

"I was saying you were about to start with us for the Canadian, striking it in the Panhandle, somewhere this side of Mad Woman Crick."

"Like —— I be!" roared Williams, coming to a halt. "Why, dod-rot your hide, Kit, I've just come in. First time I've seen white folks for eighteen months. I've got to speak to that crowd back there tonight on transmigration of souls. I've promised my solemn word. You wouldn't have a preacher of the Gospel go back on his word, would you? In two or three weeks——"

"You can tell it to me as we ride along," cut in Carson. Then to a slouching teamster: "Hi, Bill! Lead out my horse and two mounts for my friends. The best you have—important business."

"Well, I'll be cussed!" passionately cried old man Williams, yet making no effort to escape. "I quit civilization to live with Injuns because the Injuns are sky-high above the common run of white men. I ain't been to town for a dog's age. Now that the Plains tribes are taking the path and I come down here with a mighty important spiritual message for the boys you manhandle me into going to the Panhandle. It ain't fair, Kit. It ain't right."

"I'll tell you everything as we go along. I can't take any one with me who isn't my friend. I need a man of your caliber, Pop. A regular Hawkins man.* When it comes to prevent murder and saving a young woman from what's worse than death——"

"Kit, say no more!" thundered Williams. "If what I've already told that parcel back there doesn't pull them like burning brands from the fire they can all go to —— first!"

CHAPTER III

HOW THE KIOWA LOST THEIR MEDICINE

OLD BILL WILLIAMS was perhaps the best-known white man in the Rocky Mountains when Carson was new to that wild environment. For years his fame preceded him to every camp-fire, as a trapper, trader, hunter and fighter, while his extensive knowledge of the various passes through the great barrier was unsurpassed. There was another reason why Williams stood out from a host of famous mountainmen. This was his eccentricity.

Many of his friends believed him insane. He had lived with many tribes of Indians, taking from each some of their superstitious beliefs, including that of transmigration of souls. In his early days he had been an itinerant preacher in Missouri and was proud to boast of it after leaving civilization to live with wild men in wild places. He had translated the Bible into more than one Indian dialect, but constant contact with savage life had made him a mixture of rough mountain-man and fanatic.

For Carson's work he was worth a dozen ordinary frontiersmen. His intimate knowledge of every stream and peak, his familiarity with many Indian dialects and his thorough understanding of the Indian mind made him invaluable where the quest demanded celerity of action and finesse in

*Hawkins' rifle was the choice of border men for years. It was manufactured in St. Louis. Therefore a "Hawkins" man, or a "Hawkins" horse by way of a compliment.

procedure. But if he understood the red man it was because his long soujourn among them had, in a great degree, given him the red man's mind and there was nothing in his crazy melange of a creed that he believed more firmly than that Carson was the greatest man that ever helped to explode that hoary myth—the Great American Desert.

As the three galloped clear of the narrow and sinister defiles of Apache Cañon, Carson turned in his saddle and asked the old pioneer—

"Did you know, Pop, that they say the Red Jaguar is back in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains?"

Williams, whose enthusiasm to serve a friend had been dampened by much brooding over what he had foregone at Sante Fé, lifted a gloomy visage as though not understanding. Carson repeated. The old man's eyes instantly kindled with fanatical joy.

"The dead come back?" he exclaimed, spurring to Carson's side. "It's a mighty good sign. My medicine told me long ago I should preach his funeral sermon—one that'll stick him in a grave where he'll stay put till the last trump. When I heard they had his head I was plumb discouraged at that medcine. So, it was a mistake and he's alive.

"Good. Good." And he rubbed his hands exultingly. "Reckon I'll have to make a feast for my medicine, so it won't have any hard feelings for the things I called it when they said he was rubbed out and me not there to preach that sermon. Sangre de Cristo, of course. I know just where he'll be hiving up. I'll take you there in no time."

"The young woman and her uncle come first," retorted Carson. "Young Mexico and his gang know by this time that the old man is after treasure. They'd never quit town to work for wages. They'll wipe him out somewhere on the North Canadian. Worse than death for the girl. But we'll overhaul them."

"That wagon makes them travel slow," protested Williams. "They won't hurt the old man till they're wide and clear of the Trail. We could push ahead and round up the Jaguar. I've got a rip-snorting sermon. 'He that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword.' "

"The Jaguar must wait," Carson sternly replied; and young Dane's expression of dismay lifted. "But don't be discouraged. I'm afraid that when we find Young Mexico we'll be sure to find the Jaguar near. That young devil would never have come up from Chihuahua unless a stronger mind told him to."

"How far will they stick to the Trail before swinging off?" nervously inquired Dane.

"They've already swung off," answered Carson. "I reckon they followed the Vermejo down to the South Canadian and are now striking due east. If not for the wagon holding them back we wouldn't stand any show. The old man must have insisted strong on the wagon. Even then Young Mexico wouldn't have bothered with it, but he didn't believe any one would chip into his game. And if they found the treasure he probably reckoned the wagon would be handy to cart it away in. What do you say, Bill, to quitting the Trail at Point of Rocks?"

"Moro Crick," corrected Williams. "Then we'll be well inside the circle instead of tagging on behind them. The Kiowas are out and will be sure to hold our friends up. That'll give us time to catch up."

"The Kiowas mean the Comanches and Apaches, their sworn friends," mused Carson. "It'll take sharp work to stop them from holding us up."

"Ha!" exclaimed Williams, suddenly rising in his stirrups and reining in his horse.

Instantly Carson was off his horse, his rifle across the saddle. The box-elders along a little stream were violently agitated. A second glance satisfied him it could not be a human ambuscade. Vaulting back into the saddle he raised his rifle for an investigating shot, but Williams struck up the barrel, crying:

"Wait! There! I knew it! A buck elk. It's a sure warning to me, Kit. Now, I know. He was sent to tell me. Yes; I know now. It ain't the place for a buck elk to be shoving 'round in. It's a sign."

"What do you mean?" puzzled Dane.

"That my soul will enter a buck elk when I die. Kit, promise me this; don't ever shoot a rangy buck elk that seems to hanker for your camp-fire. Promise!"

"Any marks?" gravely asked Carson.

The old man pondered a moment, then his eyes lighted with vision and he confidently answered:

"Yes; a buck elk with a round whitish

spot on his left flank. His eyes will remind you of me. I can see him now, standing in a cloud of fire. That's the critter to keep shet of. Promise?"

"I promise," was the solemn reply. Then for Dane's benefit: "You understand that when Pop dies his soul will enter a buck elk like what he has described to us. If ever you draw a bead on such a critter, don't shoot."

"I don't know as I go so far as to say that," remonstrated Williams. "It might keep my spirits up to have the young man potting away at me. But don't you shoot, Kit."

Several days passed with Dane alarmed at what he considered to be their lagging pursuit. Now they had quit the trail he believed they were wasting much time in useless caution. His sailor's soul urged a straight course under full sail once they got their bearings. But Carson was continually riding ahead and signaling them to halt while he studied every scar of the undulating landscape, and every streak of green marking the course of some arroyo. The brown hills in the south also demanded much of his attention. Each clump of cottonwood apparently aroused the frontiersman's suspicion, and his approach to it was marked by a cautious, questioning attitude.

Old Williams, much of the time buried in a haze of superstitious reverie, was at last aroused from his profound meditations on the Unknowable by hearing Dane complain for the third time—

"Has Mr. Carson lost his way?"

The old man blinked blankly until the query seeped through his consciousness. Then gradually his hairy face began to twist and break up, and Dane was sure he was ill until he saw two big tears trickling down the big nose. Discovering the truth he irritably cried:

"Damnation! You're laughing at me."

"But you asked if Kit was lost," choked Williams.

"If he isn't lost he's mighty nervous," snapped Dane. "If we know where we're going, why don't we go ahead? He's been peeking over that rise for five minutes."

WILLIAMS grew sober and fumbled his rifle.

"I hadn't noticed the time," he mumbled, but now alertly awake. "Let me tell you something, young man; when Kit Carson spends five minutes fiddling 'round a sand-hill it's high time every one else lays low and puts on his paint. There's two ways of following a trail; one is to take enough time to finish it alive, t'other is to have your ha'r make the distance at the bridle of an Injun pony while your bones wait the wolves. My name is hitched to so many mountain passes, rivers and cricks that I've lost all count. I've been 'round and seen things. But when it comes to reading signs—ha!"

He rose in his stirrups and watched Carson closely. Dane saw the frontiersman point the right index-finger over the top of the rise, and then throw his arm diagonally across his body with the hand resting near the left shoulder. Williams leaped to the ground and motioned for Dane to do likewise.

"He's found something that's dangerous, at least something that needs looking into," informed the old man.

"Indians!" whispered Dane, his heart beating faster at the prospect of his first encounter with red men.

"No; nothing human. He motions for us to stay here. Jerusalem! He's going to shoot!"

The sharp *spang* of Carson's rifle caused Dane to jump convulsively and finger his own weapon nervously. Old Williams leaned against his horse and calmly waited. Five minutes passed, then Carson rose and beckoned for them to come up. As they breasted the rise and stood beside him Dane could see nothing. The rolling plain was empty. But Williams immediately discerned a brown mound on the bank of a dried-up stream and looked at Carson inquiringly.

"What's wrong with the buf'ler, Kit?" he finally asked.

"Barely able to walk. Something sticking into his flanks. Wait a minute till we see if my shot started any trouble."

Dane now located the dead buffalo but was entirely bewildered to understand how the huge creature could be the cause for alarm. The minute passed with the men scanning the horizon, searching out each fold in the rough surface; then Carson leaped on his horse and spurred down to the dead monarch. Dane would have followed, but Williams restrained him, saying—

"If he'd wanted company he'd 'a' asked for it."

Hardly pausing in his swift flight Carson circled the buffalo, leaning low from his saddle like a Comanche, and was pounding back before Dane could make head or tail out of the maneuver. Jumping from his horse he held out three arrows, saying:

"War-arrows. Osage, I make them from the feathering."

Old Williams examined them critically, nodded and agreed:

"Osage, as sure as we shall come back to life after death in the form of some bird or beast. They was on foot, or they'd run the buf'ler down. They're on a path against the Kiowas and had to shoot some meat. This cuss got away. It ain't a hunting-party or they'd used straight p'inted arrers that are easy to draw out." And he touched the murderous barbs. "They're going afoot and plan to ride home on Kiowa ponies.

"I tried to live with them once, but couldn't stand their way of talking. Hardly move their lips when speaking. They ain't human to talk that way. They'll cover a hundred miles at a steady, swinging trot, inside of twenty-four hours. I've know a young buck to do it in less. What say, Kit?"

"Bull's-eye for you, Pop. That buffalo was hit inside of six hours." And he called Williams' attention to the blood streaks on the arrows.

"Then the chances are they are between us and the Canadian. Between us and Cap'n West's party. If they was trailing the West party they'd be mounted. So that leaves them arter the Kiowas. Now, the question is; are the Kiowas between them and the West party, or is the West party between the Kiowas and the Osage? If the Wests are between the two tribes the Osage will bump into it and try their best to wipe it out. If the Kiowas are between the whites and the Osage, then they'll be jumped from behind and the whites will have a breathing spell."

"It's one or the other," agreed Carson; and as he led the way at a smart gallop he no longer paused to scrutinize the country. It was as if he had a map of the region in his mind and could see thereon the red men as they maneuvered for position. Dane was an indifferent horseman when it came to continuous riding, and he ached in every bone and muscle. But he would have dropped from the saddle before admitting it. Here were two men, strangers until a few days back, who had left their affairs and pleasures to undertake a dangerous quest.

Eastern-born and bred, he was used to more circumspection on the part of strangers before they would inconvenience themselves. It amazed him. He couldn't get the right view-point entirely, but he knew it was magnificent; the same spirit that sends a proud ship off its course to pick up survivors from a scuttled craft. He would expect such unselfish aid on the sea, but on land he had found the usual motto to be "Every man for himself."

With scarcely a pause Carson guided them to a little arroyo, flanked by low mountains in the south, and by open, rough country in the north. Halting in the dried-up bed of the stream he dismounted and picketed his horse. Without a word old Bill did likewise, and then began excavating the sand and calling on Dane to bring him an armful of box-elder twigs. Dane blindly obeyed and soon learned the old man's purpose. The hole was filling with muddy water and the twigs were to be used in lining the sides of the excavation.

"I can do that," volunteered Dane; and with a sailor's deftness he wove the twigs rapidly into a fine basketwork that would hold back the sand and allow the water to filter through.

"Well, you can do something," was old Bill's dubious compliment.

Dane winced and smiled sheepishly.

"Jerked meat, or game?" Williams asked Carson.

"Jerked meat," ruled Carson without removing his gaze from the northern sky-line. "No shooting. No fire. We're within a few miles of the Canadian, and by this time the Osage have either overtaken the West party, or have met up with the Kiowas."

"Mr. Carson, if there is any chance of their fighting Cap'n West let us push on and help him," cried Dane, his agonized mind picturing Blanche West a prisoner among the Indians.

"That's what we're here for," dryly retorted Carson, but with a smile that took any sting from his words. "The horses are tired and must rest. Then we'll push north and find the Osage trail. I'm hoping it's the Kiowa the Osage have jumped. I'm positive they're moving against a village. They'd never take the path afoot unless

they had their prize located. Their scouts have attended to that."

"But if by accident they do run into the West party?"

"Then Young Mexico and his men will put up a fight that the Osage will always remember," retorted Carson. "Mexico and his men are the worst kind of scum, but there's one thing they can do—fight. Don't fret; we'll soon be under way. Try your teeth on some of the dried beef."

DANE'S teeth were strong and his appetite good, but the bundle of sun-cured buffalo meat, resembling strips of bark, was not to his liking. Heretofore Carson had provided flesh and fowl with such ease and regularity that Dane took it for granted they could never be without venison and turkey, or grouse. Old Williams eyed him in silent amusement as he wrinkled his nose and endeavored to eat some of the tough meat. Carson's blue eyes twinkled, and he encouraged:

"It isn't bad if you get used to it. Sometimes it takes a long time to get used to it, however. Depends on how hungry you are."

"I should say it depended more on how strong you are," mumbled Dane.

"This yere is lux'ry," declared old Williams, with half a yard of the provender hanging from his mouth, something like a hog with a snake. "Reckon the hardest put to it I ever was was when I had some trouble with the Blackfeet and had to leave the village in something of a hurry. Made a start with a bunch of ponies and two mules. Ponies got away one night. No game. No time to hunt. Had to bleed the mules and drink the blood."

"I should say that was hard luck," grunted Dane with a shiver of disgust.

"Yes; the mules began to git weak," sighed the old man.

"But you escaped?"

Williams paused in his mastication, and stared at him gravely.

"Escaped? What give you that notion?"

Carson chuckled aloud, and with burning face Dane returned to his rations. It was nearing sundown when they arrived at the arroyo, and they had been there scarcely an hour when Carson's horse threw up his head and pricked his ears. Instantly the frontiersman was on his feet, rifle in hand, and stealing down the arroyo, motioning the others to keep back. The banks of the dead stream were lined with bushes, affording an excellent hiding-place if an enemy did not approach too close.

Old Williams remained seated, methodically chewing the dried meat, and Dane, although eager to be up and on guard, forced himself to pretend a similar composure. After ten minutes Carson stole back. His words electrified his companions, for he informed;

"Get ready! A score of mounted Osage, with several more afoot, are heading straight towards us. They're after water, and are traveling fast. They've counted a coup and are breaking for home."

"Are there any white prisoners?" whispered Dane.

"They haven't found the Wests. Struck the Kiowa and are running to dodge pursuit and punishment. Probably found a small band of Kiowa left at some village to guard the ponies."

Leaving their horses secured in the deepest part of the arroyo the three men advanced to where the bed of the stream ended in the plain. And Dane saw them—a clump of bobbing dots. As they drew nearer he could make out the warriors running beside the horsemen.

"Osage are of Sioux stock. Mighty cruel," informed Carson. "Got a bad name for breaking their promises. Usually fighting all the other tribes."

"So shoot to kill when you shoot. They ain't got but mighty few friends," grimly added Williams, his beard bristling.

As he finished speaking there came a shrill neigh up the arroyo, and the approaching braves dropped from sight behind their horses, vanishing like magic. Those afoot found cover in the grass and occasional shrubs.

"—— that pony of yours, boy," gritted Williams.

"How do you know it wasn't yours?" countered Dane.

"Ours don't do that," murmured Carson. "But you're not to blame for your horse."

An arrow whistled into the arroyo behind them, seeking out their position. Carson aimed at a tuft of grass and fired, and Dane saw his first warrior killed, as the savage leaped into sight and fell sprawling. A second Indian suddenly rose and scuttled to an old buffalo wallow. Dane picked him off

neatly, and was much surprized at his feat.

"Good shot," endorsed Carson. "All right, Bill; I've loaded."

With a grunt of satisfaction Williams, who had been holding his fire, caught a warrior trying to outflank them.

"He had a blue half-circle painted on his chest, pointing downward. Means he has killed four men," proudly informed the old man.

It was now dusk, with the light going rapidly. A shrill cry, and Carson barely had time to warn, "They're coming!" when the Osage rose and rushed forward in a semicircle.

Dane fired and missed. Old Williams and Carson, with the same deliberation they would use in shooting game, fired together, and two warriors went down. The line wavered for a moment, the Indians uncertain as to how many were opposed to them; and with marvelous rapidity the frontiersmen finished reloading. The Indians refreshed their courage with a series of terrific yells and bounded forward.

Dane reloaded before they reached the bank of the arroyo and fired just after his friends dropped two victims. He did not miss this time. Then Old Williams began shouting defiances in several Indian dialects, and the Osage verged on confusion, not knowing what manner of foe they had stirred up.

"At them boys!" yelled Carson, springing to the top of the bank and screaming shrilly.

Williams joined him, whooping lustily, and the two fired their pistols while Dane went down with a greasy brave in his arms.

It was over almost at once, the Osage fleeing back to their ponies.

"Dane!" cried Carson, jumping down the bank, his face worried with fear.

Dane rolled the savage off from him and staggered to his feet and proudly pointed at the vanquished. He had killed him with the savage's own knife.

"Took some of his harness away when we fell," he panted. "Guess I'll keep it as a souvenir."

Laughing hysterically he held up a long rawhide box, explaining:

"Had it on his back. I tore it loose in trying to get hold of him. He was so greasy I guess he would have done for me if I hadn't caught hold of this. They may be fierce fighters, but none of them would last long on the *Atlantic Queen* in a man's row."

Carson took the box and cried out in surprize on opening it.

"Look, Bill! I reckon he's counted the biggest coup of any of us," he exclaimed.

"Greater glory! The boy has captured their *taime!*"

"What do you mean?" excitedly demanded Dane.

Carson held up an image representing a human figure, less than two feet in length and dressed in a robe of white feathers, with pendants of ermine skin and strings of blue beads around the neck, and painted grotesquely on face, neck and back with suns and moons. The body was fashioned from a dark-green stone, resembling jade.

"Looks like a doll," commented Dane.

"It's the Kiowas' tribal medicine. It's the 'woman' *taime*," reverently explained Williams, his Western superstitions surging to the fore. "It's never taken from the village. Greater Glory! But won't there be some finger-cutting and tearing of ha'r along of this. Why, boy! It's worth all the ponies the Kiowas have or can steal. Who's the hereditary keeper, Kit?"

"Ansote—Long Foot," Carson replied, busy fishing out two more images; only these were but a few inches in length. "See, Pop, here's the 'man' *taime*. This other, shaped like a kidney, is the 'bear kidney' *taime*. Now these two are often taken on a war-path, but the 'woman' never is. That shows the Osage surprized a village. Most of the Kiowas were probably away, trailing the West party. Well, they won't hold their *k'ado*—sun dance—this Summer unless they get these back. Mr. Dane, you had better let me keep these tied to my saddle. They may prove of great value to us. But if we're caught napping they'll prove to be very dangerous property to be packing 'round."

WILLIAMS hurried up the arroyo, calling back:

"High time we was leaving here. The Kiowas will be pounding along any minute. Dohasan (Little Bluff) himself will be giving the pipe when he hears of this."

"Dohasan has gone with a party to trade with the Crows I was told just before leaving Bent's. Heart-Eater is in charge just now," said Carson. "But we'll be going just the same. The Canadian is the safest place for us now we know the Kiowas will

be coming down here. The fact the Osage captured the 'woman' *taime* shows the bulk of the braves were away from the village. The fact the war-party didn't take the 'man' or 'bear' *taime* with them shows they hadn't given the pipe, or sung the 'travel song.' "

"What do you mean, Mr. Carson?" anxiously asked Dane, sensing a danger to the Wests in the frontiersman's words.

"They give the pipe when they start out on a big war-path, say, against the Utes or Osage, with whom they do lots of fighting. They beat a hoop for a drum and sing the 'travel song' when a small band goes out on a raid. But when the tribal medicine is left behind and most of the braves quit the village it shows they're trailing a train. In other words, the Kiowas are after the West party. The Osage found the village weakly defended. Knowing this there's but one thing to do."

"I'm hearing with both ears," barked old Williams.

"We must push on and overtake the Wests and help Young Mexico stand off the redskins."

"Overtake him and kill him and then stand off the reds, you mean," hotly amended Dane.

"It'll be time enough to even accounts with Young Mexico when we've got clear of the Kiowas," quietly retorted Carson. "We must make his fight our fight to save the girl. He'll be willing, I think, to call a truce for the sake of having our three rifles. Anyway, that's the game until something turns up to spoil it."

Old man Willliams climbed on to his horse, shaking his head ponderously. As they clattered down the arroyo he announced:

"I reckon I'll be called on to preach Young Mexico's funeral sermon. I feel it in my bones. Then I'll top off with the Red Jaguar. Had a dream last night what I couldn't understand till the boy captured the *taime*. Seems if I was standing on Williams Peak—named after me, son, me being the first white man to ever prowl up there—and a small wave of ink-black wind come whining up the slope. Just black wind, mind you, and yet I could feel it, and I cotched hold of it.

"I just grabbed that black wind like you'd grab a blanket, and rolled it in a ball and jammed it down in a hole and trompled rocks and dirt on it. Then come another wave, bigger'n blacker'n the first, and it howled instead of whined. It was a mighty big wave, tall as a mounting, and as it got close it roared. I tell you I had a tussle to git that underground, but I done it. And there you be! First wave was Young Mexico; and the last one was the devil, his boss, Red Jaguar himself."

"Let's hope so," Carson gravely encouraged.

It was now fairly dark, but Carson picked a path to the North Canadian without any difficulty, and after watering and resting their horses a bit they turned down-stream. After cautiously traveling for a few miles both border-men halted and sniffed the air.

"Smoke," whispered Williams.

"Kiowa village," added Carson. "Swing out on the plain where you can run for it and dodge them in the dark if they jump you. I'll scout ahead."

As Williams and Dane began their detour Carson dismounted and led his horse along the fringe of cottonwood and willows. When he found the smoke was increasing he left his intelligent steed under cover of a bunch of willows and crawled forward on his hands and knees until he came to the scene of the slaughter. The teepees were smoldering and giving off much smoke. There was no signs of the main band of Kiowas having returned.

After waiting a bit to make sure no survivor lurked in the ruined village Carson advanced and came to the headless body of a woman beside a buffalo hide. In her hand was the knife she had used in scrapping the hide, evidencing how completely by surprize the village had been taken.

A flare of flame from the smoldering debris revealed the transverse stripes on her leggings, which recorded six scalps taken by her husband. There came a gust of wind up the river and the ruins of the huge medicine-lodge burst into flames and Carson's face grew stern as he beheld the gruesome climax of Osage work. Brass pots, such as the Kiowas obtained from the Pawnees for a fat price in ponies, were arranged in a circle. Each pot held the head of a Kiowa victim.

He counted the heads of five men, a dozen women and several children. None were scalped, as the Osage, contrary to the custom of the Plains tribes, beheaded instead of scalping.

Now he heard a shrill chorus of lamentation down the river trail and he hastened back to his horse. A survivor of the massacre had reached the war-party and some, if not all, of the warriors were coming back to the village. With the death-chant ringing in his ears Carson spurred through the cottonwood and swung out on to the plain. Within an hour he had picked up his friends, and without slowing his pace he directed them to follow him farther from the river.

"Redskins returning. It gives us a chance to scout 'round them and get between them and the Wests."

"Look in at the village?" curiously asked Williams.

"Ugh! Devil's work. Children as well as women!"

"Heads in kettles, eh? I reckoned so. And to think I wasted time trying to translate the Bible for them same Osage."

"The Kiowas will even it up. They'll drag some Osage heads before it's time for the next *k'ado*," was the grim rejoinder. "Now, at top speed. The minute they quit attacking, Dane's friends, the cap'n and his niece, face a new danger. Young Mexico is now at liberty to get and use the paper that tells where the treasure is buried—and he'll leave no witnesses."

CHAPTER IV

HOW YOUNG MEXICO PLAYED A TRUMP

THE Kiowa Indians were prominent among the Plains tribes because of their central position. Unlike their neighbors they had no memory, nor legend, of ever having been anything but a tribe of hunters. In this respect they were something of an ethnological curiosity; but it made them excellent hunters of men as well as of herbivora. All tribes in contact with the buffalo had been decoyed in some degree from a sedentary life and the fixed habitat of agricultural pursuits.

The monstrous creature, like a shaggy *Pied Piper*, tolled them up and down the continent, until, generally speaking, the Northern Indians depended on animal food for three-fourths of their living, while those in the South consumed the same proportion of vegetable food. But within the memory of the Kiowa there was never a period when they did not subsist by the chase. This pursuit of the buffalo led the red hunters of all tribes to violate territorial rights and engage in many wars—a biological tragedy.

That other miracle, the horse, descended from the animals brought to the New World by the Spaniards, was quickly seized upon by the Kiowa. The Dakotas, astounded when first beholding the marvelous animal, called him *sun-ka-wakan*, or "great sacred dog." Formerly the Indian, afoot, was hard-pressed to procure his daily meat; now, mounted on swift ponies, he obtained a twelve months' supply in one day of good hunting. Formerly anchored to one locale, now he frequently ranged a thousand miles from home.

Because of their geographical location the Kiowa could strike north and south with equal convenience, beginning in the Spring when the grass was high enough for their ponies. They pushed their conquests as far south as Durango, or Galveston and Matagorda bays, and to Cataract Cañon on the Colorado. They brought their booty and prisoners back to the Arkansas and its tributaries; for this was the river most dear to them, and its history is the tribe's history.

Whether victorious or beaten these incorrigibles always returned to their *Sese p'a* to celebrate the Summer sun-dance and to propitiate their tribal medicine, the *taime*. Now that it was mid-June and the down was showing on the cottonwoods the *taime* keeper would be bringing out the sacred images and preparing the big medicine-lodge, for the festival if not for the paralyzing coup of the Osage.

Carson and Williams fully appreciated the tribe's terrible rage and dismay at the disaster. To Dane the three images were so much foolishness.

"It's only their fetish," he scoffed as the three men galloped toward the morning sun. "They'll tie a piece of skin round another rock or stick and fall to worshiping that. It's all a part of their heathenish nonsense in making a racket to cure sick folks and yowling over their dead."

"Sick folks back in the States, if they lives in cities, are surrounded by more noise than a medicine-man can make," reminded Carson. "White folks wear black clothes for morning, and not many years ago used to hire folks to do their mourning. I heard an English traveler, Sir William

Stuart, tell about it at the rendezvous on Green River. It struck me as funny as anything the Indians do. Their black paint takes the place of black clothes."

"And see here, boy," sternly broke in Williams, "I've preached the Word in Missouri, and I've turned it into a dozen Injun dialects, and I've learned it don't pay to make fun of Injun medicine. I reckon those *taime* hitched to Kit's saddle may be the biggest kind of luck for us. Then again, you're dead wrong about their shifting their medicine. Why, that 'woman' *taime* has been held by the Kiowas ever since 1770. They got it from the Arapaho, and it's a duplicate of the original which the Arapaho had and which the Crows stole from them. The Kiowas believe to this day that the Crows have the first *taime*."

Somewhat impressed by this bit of history Dane compromised by declaring:

"I'll think highly of the medicine if it helps us to rescue Blanche and her uncle. Who is this Young Mexico, anyway?"

"Blue-eyed, curly-haired young chap that went wrong in the making," said Carson. "Hasn't a drop of Mexican blood in him. I once heard him say he was Pennsylvania born. That was when he wasn't wanted so much as he is now. He can't be more than twenty-one or two, but there's a kink in his brain that makes him do the thing he shouldn't do. He'd rather cut a man's throat and loot his pockets of an ounce of dust than to make a thousand ounces in honest trade. If he was back in the States he'd be locked up for life in a madhouse."

Dane shivered. This was the man who was posing as Blanche West's protector.

"How can the Red Jaguar be any worse?" he groaned.

"Because he is older and better balanced. Border men reckon he and Mexico will come to a show-down some day. Just as sure as they're together for any length of time the youngster will take the notion to become boss instead of taking orders. And the Jaguar will rub him out. Pop knows the Jaguar's pedigree better'n I do."

"He's a unregenerated hellion," growled Williams, snarling over his words. "Met up with him once in a Ute village, unexpected. Tried to save him with the spoken word. Hadn't more'n opened on him when he flung his knife at me and I shot him in the leg. Injuns kept us apart and he vamoosed."

He brushed back his long coarse hair and exposed a deep notch in the top of his ear.

"But he didn't get clear of me till I had told him I intended to preach his funeral sermon. And, greater glory! now that he ain't really dead I'm going to do it. Got to do it. Dreamed once he come along and shot a buck elk with a white spot on his flank. Boy, that elk was me. So you see I can't afford to die and pass into a elk till that varmint is wiped out. His soul will enter a snake. Can see just what kind he'll be—some low-down serpent that bites and kills in the dark. Never a rattler. Rattler's a gen'l'man. Always gives warning and never fetches the fight to you. After he's really dead I'm going to turn snake-hunter. He's using Young Mexico now, but he'll quietly drop him when the time comes.

"Why, boy, what do you think of a scum that'll kill his own sister's sweetheart just to snag a pouch of gold? Red Jaguar did that. Bosom friends with the man. Sister a howling beauty. She found him robbing the corpse and went mad and cussed her brother up-hill and down till he sure ought to land in Tophet. He made for the Sangre de Cristo Mountings and gathered a band and begun raiding the valleys. Carried off young girls for ransom, and worse. Tackled freight caravans. Did a wholesale business in running off stock.

"Most fellers of his breed rob the rich and keep friends with the poor. The Jaguar ain't built on that style. Every one he can strike must pay something, whether he be don or peon. We all reckoned Wiltson had bagged him. When Kit said he was back in the mountings I was knocked all in a heap. But when I remembered I was foreordained to preach his funeral sermon I could see his return to the Sangre de Cristo was the work of Providence."

"Better hurry up the preaching, Pop, before he kills any more folks," warned Carson, turning in toward the river.

He quickly picked up the trail of the Kiowas and followed it at gallop until it crossed the stream. Finding the ford Carson splashed through it and reined in on the bank to point north and inform:

"The trail leads straight to the North Canadian! That means the Wests are

somewhere up there. We'll work sharp as the Kiowas will return to wind up the job once they decide they can't overtake the Osage. The Osage will be waiting for them, but the whites will escape. How far to Wolf Creek, Pop?"

"About forty miles to the mouth. Kiowas hold their cat-tail *k'ado* there sometimes. They like to gather the rushes and eat the soft, white part in the lower part of the stalk. Not bad eating, either. There's always a small village on the crick."

At noon they halted and Dane winced when he saw Williams unfastening the roll of jerked meat from his saddle. Carson smiled in quiet amusement and rapidly scanned the horizon. Then he requested—

"Give me your lead, Pop."

Williams produced a slung-shot, fashioned from a four-ounce piece of lead fastened to a thong of rawhide, used by trappers in despatching game caught in traps, and taking it Carson promised—

"I think I can find something that your sailor stomach will enjoy."

"Don't you bother about me, Mr. Carson. It's no time to humor me. I'm beginning to like that meat."

"I'll be back in a few minutes."

With that Carson made off on foot toward a ribbon of green, marking the course of a shallow stream. When he returned he had two prairie grouse, bagged, as he explained, by his throwing the slung-shot.

"And just a handful of fire, Pop. It mustn't smoke," he warned.

Williams carefully collected dry buffalo-chips and some dry twigs and quickly dressed and broiled the birds over what seemed to Dane to be a miraculously small fire. With salt from Carson's saddle-bag the sailor appeased his wolfish hunger.

As he finished he ruefully lamented:

"What a hog! I haven't left hardly anything for you two."

I'm used to the meat. Both were intended for you," assured Carson.

"I never eat 'em since Jem Pease was wiped out by the Cheyannes and I see his spirit, in a dream, had entered a grouse," solemnly observed Williams. "Maybe neither of them birds was Jem, but you can't take any chances where a friend is concerned."

THE horses were allowed to graze for an hour, during which time Williams and Carson slept. Dane found it impossible to follow their example, his mind running hotly after the girl and Young Mexico, the killer. Late that afternoon they struck the North Canadian several miles below the mouth of Wolf Creek, according to Williams' reckoning. Here again they readily picked up the trail of the Kiowas, the war-party having followed the south bank of the river.

Bidding his friends to water the horses Carson started down-stream afoot, looking for signs. He had covered about a quarter of a mile when he straightened and waved his hand and came running back at an easy trot.

"He's found something," murmured Williams. "Something that tickles him."

Carson's face was beaming with satisfaction as he joined his friends.

"They haven't quit the wagon yet," he announced. "They were held up several days by an attack right where I stopped. They used the wagon to stand off the redskins. Tire marks tell the whole story. Then they fought the Indians off and managed to move on. Indians followed and must have made them go into camp again. Young Mexico has been too busy fighting the reds to show his hand to Cap'n West. I figure it's been one fight after another ever since they struck the river. That means they've made mighty slow time and we must be close to them."

"Then you believe Blanche is—that they are safe?" cried Dane, moving toward his horse.

"They were unharmed up to the time the Kiowas got word their medicine had been stolen. And I believe they are all right this minute. They've made only a few miles a day, and some days they've had to stick in one place. Young Mexico is shrewd enough to know the Kiowas will come back when they find they have no chance to overtake the Osage. So long as he has a fight on his hands he'll let his other plans rest."

"Then in Heaven's name let's push on without any delay," fiercely urged Dane.

"It can't be done as easy as that," discouraged Carson. "It'll take some maneuvering to get into their camp without being shot. They'll open fire on sight unless they know we'll help them stand off the Kiowas."

"Keep your impatience out of your head, boy. It's foreordained that certain things shall come to pass if we don't bull in and spoil our medicine," rumbled Williams.

Carson lifted a hand for silence and cocked his ear. The others heard it, a dull report, quickly followed by several.

"Which way? Are the Wests attacked again?" anxiously demanded Dane, unable to locate the origin of the sound.

"It's between us and Wolf Creek. I don't understand. The Wests are downstream. There can't be more Osage upstream. Yet some one is fighting something. We can't ride on without knowing what's behind us. Come on!"

With a spring he was astride his weary horse and galloping to the west, toward Wolf Creek. Williams pounded along at his side, with Dane behind, swearing hysterically at what seemed to be an idiotic maneuver, one that delayed the rescue of Blanche and her uncle. However, a few minutes of furious galloping ended their advance. At a thicket of willows Carson directed them to leave their horses and follow him to a low sand ridge a short distance ahead.

Covering their heads with grass they elevated them above the crest of the ridge. Below them bloomed puffs of white, followed by the sharp bark of rifles. Dane's sea eyes quickly picked out the details. Several objects were coming toward the ridge. Back of these were other objects. It was from the latter that the smoke arose.

"Men on horses chasing redskins," grunted Carson.

"Maybe some of Young Mexico's men started to follow the Kiowas when they drew off," suggested Williams, shading his eyes against the western sun.

"No," dissented Carson. "Young Mexico smells treasure. And he wants to save his hide. He'd never stop to chase Indians. The redskins are putting up a game fight. There! At least one of them has a rifle."

Dane saw it. One of the savages stood at bay till a horseman was almost upon him; then a *puff* and the horse galloped back, the man dragging by one foot in the stirrup. This incident caused the horsemen to be more wary and allowed the Indians to resume their flight toward the ridge and add to their lead.

"A small village on Wolf Creek jumped by whites," cried Carson. "Lord! See that redskin on the left. Kiowas they surely are, but I can't stand by and see that lose out."

And he pointed to a tall warrior who was running toward them and carrying some bundle in his teeth. Every rod or two the brave would halt and drop his burden and wheel about and discharge several arrows at the horsemen, then resume his flight.

"He's got a younker wrapped in a blanket!" cried Carson admiringly and pushing forward his rifle.

"And the whites are wearing red hankers 'round their heads, Kit! I reckon that settles what we'll do," said Williams.

The riders, proceeding cautiously, evidently believed they had the game in their own hands, for they called hoarsely to each other to spread out and leave no survivors. They were now close enough for Dane and his friends to note the blood-red handkerchiefs tied 'round each head.

"That makes it easier for us," said Carson contentedly, sighting along his rifle. "Red Jaguar's men. I don't see him with them. Dane, shoot at the right flank. Pop, take care of the left. I'll drill plumb center."

The three reports came almost together, emptying as many saddles, and causing consternation to both red and white men. The former, unable to diagnose their strange deliverance, swerved south and scuttled swiftly away along the base of the ridge. The outlaws, frantically drawing rein, fired a hasty volley at the top of the ridge, and galloped madly up-stream.

"I feel better," said Carson as they returned to their horses. "But Red Jaguar's men must have some mighty queer thoughts about this time."

"Reckon they think the devil is after them," chuckled old Williams.

"What next, and what does it all mean?" inquired Dane.

"Next, we'll go hotfoot after Young Mexico." It means that Mexico sent a messenger to Red Jaguar's stronghold for help when first held up by the Kiowas. It's surprizing he didn't come himself to get the girl."

"—— him! I wish he had. Now he'll send more men."

"He'll be sure to come himself next time, if I don't mistake him," replied Carson.

"It's all working out according to the Scriptures," gravely assured Williams. "And if we knew the full truth, Kit, I reckon that that *taime* you're packing has something to do with it. Maybe if we made it a little feast——"

"Give it some dried meat, Pop," encouraged Carson, pricking his horse into a canter.

Reaching the point where they had first struck the river Carson reined in but did not dismount. He quickly arrived at a decision and galloped on. The sun was behind the mountains and shadows were turning the river-bottoms into an unreal world when he next halted and sprang to the ground.

"Smoke!" was his laconic answer to Dane's questioning gaze.

"Young Mexico," grimly added Williams.

"Blanche!" whispered Dane, staring in vain for a sign of smoke against the eastern sky.

"Jump down. They may have scouts out on their back trail," ordered Carson. "Pop, you make camp here while I go ahead alone."

"But I can't stay here while Blanche is so near, and in danger," wrathfully informed Dane. "I must go with you."

"Then you'll probably kill her," was the quiet reply.

Dane struck his fist against his forehead, and hoarsely cried:

"Forgive me, Mr. Carson! I'm just a fool sailor-man. You've picked up my bundle of trouble and made it yours. I'll go below and await orders."

"You're doing fine. You're a regular Hawkins feller," soothed Carson. "The girl won't be in any danger tonight, I'm thinking. The silver is supposed to be cached at Mad Woman Crick, some twenty miles down-river. I'll scout 'round the camp and see what I can find out. Maybe we'll all have a chance for action by morning. It won't do to jump them till sure of getting the girl and her uncle to one side. And if I could happen upon Young Mexico alone I think our troubles would be over."

"And kindly remember, boy, that that *taime* is —— strong medicine when taken together with what the Scriptures say about 'He that killeth with the sword must be killed by the sword.' Only you've got to give it a chance to get in its work," earnestly warned old Williams.

CARSON found the camp in a bend of the river, which protected it on three sides. It was well-situated in a grove of cottonwoods, and on the land side stood the covered wagon, forming part of the barrier. From each end of the wagon extended rough defenses of dead wood and brush. The frontiersman had ascended a knoll a short distance from the wagon, and from this position could occasionally glimpse figures of men as they moved about before a large fire. The whole appearance of the camp conveyed an impression of permanency.

"Young Mexico knows the Kiowas will come back and overhaul him. He plans to stick here till the Jaguar can bring or send reinforcements," Carson decided.

That the outlaws had confidence in their strength or else confidence they would soon be reinforced, was shown by their careless laughter as they moved about through the growth. Carson's position, while the nearest available to the wagon, could not be used for further reconnaissance, as the slope on the river side was bare of cover and would leave him open to discovery if he attempted to descend before the night thickened. To wait until night was well spent would avail little, as by that time the girl and her uncle would be asleep and not to be aroused without attracting the attention of the sentinels. The old man especially would be a hopeless subject to rescue by stealth.

"Avast! Or I'll lay alongside and scuttle you!" roared a deep voice from the wagon. "Where's that tea, you swabs? I'll be tossing a solid shot across your bow in another minute!"

"Coming, uncle, coming," called back a clear, sweet voice.

There followed more smashing orders, threats and warnings in the deep-sea voice; then the girl joined him, and the impatient bellowings lessened in volume and at last ceased.

"The old man is sick in the wagon," Carson told himself in dismay. "It would be hard enough to get him clear if he could ride a horse. But sick!"

Half an hour passed with the scout obtaining only fragments of glimpses through the trees as a figure stood out a silhouette against the fire, then the undergrowth near the wagon crackled and some one stepped outside the barrier.

"Better be keerful, miss," growled a hoarse voice of a sentinel.

"I won't go farther than this, Mr. Jacks," she replied.

Carson could barely make out her slim figure through the gloom. His blood thrilled with a wild hope. If he could attract her attention without frightening her, or if she would but wander to the foot of the slope! A dash in the darkness and she would be across his saddle and racing back to her lover. But she would not leave the barricade. He instantly reformed his plans, determined to make a ride for it to the very edge of the grove and snatch her up.

It was obvious nothing had happened yet to arouse her fears, while Captain West's language proved he still considered himself as commander of the party. Carson began to work his way down the knoll to get his horse when the captain's voice again shattered the night and spoiled all plans by roaring:

"Ahoy, lass! Heave to. Haven't those red devils taught you not to cruise outside without a convoy?"

"I'm in no danger, uncle. Mr. Mexico says the Indians have left us and that we can go on very soon," she called back.

The captain roared something Carson could not catch, although the sentiment seemed to be directed against Mexico, for mention of the outlaw was fused with "landlubber" and similar terms. The frontiersman crawled back to the top of the rise just in time to hear a low voice directing:

"Go inside the barricade, Miss West. No one allowed outside. Orders are orders."

"But you're outside."

"Inside, or I'll carry you. Jacks, you forget my orders again and you'll answer to me."

Carson could not see them but the dialog told him all. Young Mexico had come upon the girl, doubtless directed to her by her conversation with the captain. He heard the rustling of bushes and knew she was returning to the camp. A further movement of the undergrowth was followed by a figure emerging from the shadows. Young Mexico was taking a ramble. He moved back and forth before the barrier for a few minutes, pausing now and then to address an order to some hidden sentinel. Then suddenly he advanced toward the knoll.

Carson dared not move for fear of betraying himself, but he did reach down to his belt and drew his knife. Whistling carelessly the man breasted the slope until within a few feet of the top of the knoll, when he ceased his tune and stood motionless. Carson held his breath. Even in the uncertain light he could distinguish a certain boyish grace in the figure which was characteristic of Young Mexico.

"Oh, Jacks!" shrilly called out the bandit leader without shifting his position.

"Yes, Boss," replied a deep voice from the edge of the timber.

"If I don't return inside of ten minutes—carry out the orders."

The sentinel did not answer for a few moments, then inquired—

"Both?"

"Yes."

"All right. Want some of the boys to come?"

"No."

Leaning forward he stared at Carson's prostrate form and softly said:

"I saw your head against the skyline. You're a white man. You're spying. I don't know who you are, or what you're after, but if I ain't back in camp on time ther'll be a dead girl and a very dead old man. *Sabe?*"

Moving as if on springs Carson was erect and breast to breast with the outlaw. His left hand darted to the belt, which he found empty. His right hand pressed a knife against Young Mexico's throat.

"If I hadn't been a fool and left my hardware behind I'd have nailed you, my friend," hissed Mexico. "But I was half-way up the slope before I spotted your head. Hope you're good at reckoning time, for Jacks may think nine minutes is ten minutes."

"How do you know I'm not one of you?" whispered Carson.

"If you were you'd be down at the fire and not sneaking 'round up here. Who are you and what's your game? If you're our kind you're welcome at the camp. If you're some honest skunk you be mighty careful or you'll kill a likely-looking girl and a —— fool of an old man."

"Look closer and see if you know me," murmured Carson, pushing back his hat and advancing his face.

With a convulsive start the outlaw's careless demeanor vanished.

"——! Carson of Taos!" he gritted. "Thought you was up to Bent's! When I see a man was hiding up here—and knowing no Injuns were near—I reckoned some one had babbled in Santa Fé and that a posse was after me."

"I'm after you and I'm going to get you," promised Carson.

Young Mexico shrugged his shoulders and regained some of his composure.

"If I ain't back in camp on time the girl dies. Don't s'pose the old man counts any. Yes, I'm glad it's you and not some bull-headed feller. Now, I'm going to give an order. Lay a hand on me and you kill two people down there."

With that he placed his fingers to his lips and emitted an ear-splitting whistle and yelled—

"Surround the knoll and kill a spy!"

Carson struck with his left, a terrific drive to the jaw, and sent the outlaw shooting down the slope; then wheeled and ran in the opposite direction to where he had left his horse. By the time the outlaws had swarmed clear of the camp, spurred on by the insane cries of their leader, the quarry was outside the circle, his trained mount carefully picking his way up the river trail.

CHAPTER V

HOW CARSON TRADED THE MEDICINE

AS THE frontiersman rode into camp he was annoyed to hear Williams' voice raised in a loud harangue. By the light of the tiny, sheltered fire he saw the eccentric's face was distorted with anger, while Dane's countenance was sullen and resentful.

"Here's Kit. He'll bear me out. Kit, what do you think this boy has went and done?"

"I wish you'd not speak of me as a 'boy,' Mr. Williams," haughtily informed Dane.

"He's got a small looking-glass, like what the Comanches are so keen to git from traders; and he won't throw it away."

"Softly, softly," cautioned Carson.

"But it's all bosh, my throwing it away," angrily insisted Dane.

"Bosh, is it?" bitterly retorted Williams. "And me telling you it's a deadly tabu to the *taime*, just as bears and rabbits and skunks is! You'd keep that glass and run the risk of having the Kiowa medicine turn against us! That's what you'd do, because you're a hot-headed boy. Don't I remember when White Bear went against the Utes, taking the two little *taime* with him and was wiped out, all on account of his braves broiling bear meat?"

"Oh, —— your superstitions! You're worse than a sailor," wrathfully cried Dane, hurling the offending glass far out into the darkness.

"I'm afraid you didn't do it in time. Maybe I can stave off bad luck, but that tabu has been raising hob with the *taime* ever since we captured it," said Williams.

His head dropped forward, his eyes focused on the heart of the fire, and the upward play of the light revealed the growing vacancy of his expression as he surrendered to one of his strange spells, which he claimed brought him visions.

"You, two people have talked so the whole Panhandle could hear you," said Carson sternly, stamping out the fire. "No time for that sort of stuff, Pop. I've just had a brush with Young Mexico. Reckon he counted coup, if either of us did. I don't reckon he'll quit camp to hunt for us, but all my plans are knocked in the head and we must get out of here in a hurry. Saddle up!"

As they obeyed he hurriedly recited his experience on the knoll. When he finished the old man turned on Dane and demanded:

"Will you say it's all bosh now? Eh? Didn't I tell you that looking-glass would play the devil with our medicine? Kit might'a'got the gal if not for that cussed tabu!"

"There, there, Pop. That's playing it too strong," hastily interjected Carson, "I reckon a tabu doesn't work against a medicine if the man having it doesn't know it's tabu. That's all ended. We've had enough of it."

Silent, but by no means appeased, old Williams sulkily brought up the rear, Dane riding ahead with Carson. As they turned their backs to the river and spurred toward the South Canadian the young man timidly inquired—

"You don't believe that little looking-glass——"

"No, no. Forget it. It would have resulted the same if there wasn't a looking-glass in the world."

A few minutes of silent riding, and Dane complained—

"But why ride hard to overtake them,

and, when we've succeeded, then turn tail and run away?"

"It isn't quite as simple as raising a cache of beaver pelts. I was keen to find them. Now, I'm keen to find the Kiowas."

"Well, I'll be ——. Then we've wasted time in finding them!"

The tone was rich with disgust but Carson did not heed it, and kindly explained:

"I don't think so. My palaver with Young Mexico will, I'm sure, make him shift his plans. He'll keep his hands off the old man and the girl until he knows we're rubbed out. He can't figger any longer on putting them away and blaming it on to the redskins, for I'm a witness. If he'd disposed of them before meeting up with me he could have said the last Kiowa attack did for them. He'll bank on Red Jaguar and his men hunting us down and rubbing us out. But the time will come when I'll leave him in prime condition to be stuck in a tree to dry."

"I'm always getting off my course," sighed Dane. "It's all so confused. If it wasn't for Blanche——"

"Exactly. Blanche makes life worth living. So we'll be very careful." And he reached across and clapped his companion on the shoulder. "Ride up here, Pop; I've got a new plan."

Williams spurred abreast, and Carson rapidly informed:

"By this time the Kiowas are returning to corral the camp. We must meet them—that is, I must. Once they know we've got their medicine they'll come to terms. The Wests will be safe till the gang has shaken off the reds and Young Mexico knows I'm dead. He's waiting for Red Jaguar to join him before pushing on to Mad Woman Crick. You and Dane will hide up when we sight the Kiowas and I'll go on alone and make a dicker."

"Now, Kit, I know the Kiowas. I've labored with 'em in the past. I'm the man to go to them," earnestly insisted Williams. "I'll preach them a mess of hell-fire that'll curl their hair."

"And they'll drag your head in pay for the sermon," was the grim reply. "You'll stay behind with Dane. I'll do the trading."

With a grunt of disgust old Williams became silent. Finally he surrendered—

"If them be your last words I'll say there's a low bluff about ten miles ahead where the horses can git water."

"Find it!" sharply ordered Carson.

As if led by instinct, for the night was black, old Williams rode through the darkness, his head bowed, his clouded mind busy with some new revelations. At last he announced:

"We're here. My horse smells water."

Dismounting, the party groped about until they had procured some bits of fuel and by the light of this selected a site behind some bolders with the bluff at their backs. Carson unstrapped the *taime* box and selected the "man" *taime* and concealed it inside his buckskin shirt.

"I'm taking this as sample. Cache the others where you can get them in a hurry. If I don't raise the war-party by sunup I shall camp until my horse is rested. Look for me to return by sundown. Lay low and get all the sleep you can."

"How do you know you'll find the Indians?" puzzled Dane, to whom the quest seemed as hopeless as searching for a rowboat in the southern Pacific.

"I've got to find them."

"Ain't he got the 'man' *taime* to lead him?" Williams reminded in rich disgust.

Allowing his horse to pick his own gait Carson rode south until the first dawn was erasing the gloom from the plain. As the morning mists began rising to meet the sun he urged his horse into a gentle trot and ceaselessly studied the country. Williams, lost in his mysticism, and Dane, blinded by ignorance of the region and its people, failed to realize fully the finer points of the situation.

But there was not a phase of the dilemma which Carson had not fully weighed during his lonely ride. For the three men to attack the outlaws meant suicide. And yet the girl and her uncle must be rescued before Red Jaguar came, else death for the girl would be a great mercy. By a process of elimination Carson found one agency to employ, the Kiowas. But they must be held in check, and only their wild desire to recover their lost medicine would work this miracle. They must be made to attack, and yet restrain their blood lust. The success of his scheme pivoted on two contingencies, one of them seemingly grotesque; leaving the Kiowa camp a victor and entering the outlaws' camp alive.

He noted several black specks circling the sky-line ahead and softly exclaimed his pleasure. The specks were crows and they

were hovering over an Indian camp. He had raised the camp; the *taime* had guided him aright. Calling out to his horse he pressed on at a gallop and soon came in sight of a large war-party busy with preparing their morning meal. There was but one teepee standing, much smaller than the permanent medicine-lodge but carried along for a similar purpose.

With the great risks quarely before him he hesitated none. Among the Kiowa, Comanche, Apache, and Ute he was a demigod, and with any of the last three he would have been confident of success. But the Kiowa were below the average standard of the Plains tribes. They lacked, with certain exceptions, the manly qualities of the mighty Sioux. They were inferior to the spirited Cheyennes and possessed none of the generous attributes of the Arapahoes. The business efficiency of the Comanche was wanting.

They were courageous to a heroic degree and on this score could hold up their heads among all their neighbors; but so far as being worthy of confidence, or possessing high-minded instincts, or being able to entertain a sense of gratefulness, they were minus. Yet Carson had come to enter their midst and pit his white man's acumen against their savage cunning and trickery.

HE HALTED for a moment to study the camp. A young brave on the outskirts of the party was busily engaged in straightening arrows. Clucking to his horse the frontiersman sounded a cry and held his hand high, palm out, and with this signal of friendship rode straight for the excited warriors. They stared at him in amazement as he forced his steed to the center of the camp and leaped to the ground. Before any could accost him he haughtily demanded in the vigorous, guttural explosion that characterizes the Kiowa language—

"Who gave the pipe?"

A warrior, limping slightly, pressed forward, his beady eyes devouring the slim form of the rash intruder. It was difficult for him to believe the evidence of his senses. That this man, the most feared and respected among the Plains tribes, should deliver himself into the power of his enemies smacked of madness.

"Who gave the pipe?" impatiently repeated Carson. "Have the Kiowas lost their ears?"

"This is a small war-party," answered the warrior, the distinct stress laid on each syllable making the speech sound sinister. "No one gave the pipe, Big-Little-Man. One of our young men wished to go after horses from the Pawnees. He called in his friends and sang *Gua-dagya*."

"You lie! You did not sing the 'travel-song.' This is a big war-party. You are of the Gaigwu, who are keepers of the *taime*, and you sit on the west side of the Kiowa Camp Circle between the Elks and the Big Shields. You are Ansote, and you have lost your medicine. Now, for the last time, who gave the pipe? I have talk for him."

This amazing speech, almost overwhelming in its audacity, scored the desired effect. Ansote, or Long Foot, hereditary keeper of the *taime*, suddenly replied—

"Ten-piakia gave the pipe, Big-Little-Man."

"Then my talk is with him. Tell Heart-Eater that Big-Little-Man comes to trade with him."

The mass of scowling warriors now separated to permit the approach of a stocky-built Kiowa. The broad sash of elkskin worn about his neck like a collar and hanging low on the right side with a loop for the ceremonial arrow, marked him as a member of the Kaitsenko—"Kiowa Horses"— the highest military order of the fighting nation.

"Heart-Eater is here. What has the white man to trade?" he asked. His refusal to distinguish the frontiersman from the ordinary run of white men was a danger-signal. The warriors instantly caught their cue and pressed in closer. The chief sneeringly continued, "I see no goods. I smell no strong water. Is the white man *adalkai* (foolish)?"

"Big-Little-Man comes to trade. He has traveled far. He is tired. He will sit down," sternly retorted Carson.

Heart-Eater eyed him venomously, then dropped his eyes before the unflinching gaze. He pointed to a buffalo robe, but Carson insisted:

"The sun grows warm. The trade is very big. We will seek shelter."

And he pointed to the medicine-teepee.

The chief hesitated. He was sure of his prisoner, however, and his natural curiosity began working. He called out the names of leading warriors and turned and led the way to the teepee. Carson entered and

took a position opposite the entrance as befitted an honored guest and seated himself on a robe. The chief sat down just inside the entrance and stuck the sacred arrow in the turf in front of him.

On the other side of the entrance squatted a member of the Tonkonko, "Black-Legs," next in rank to the "Horses."

As a sign of his degree he brought with him the *pabon*, or sacred lance. This marked his place in the fighting line, just as the arrow marked the position of Heart-Eater, only with this difference; the bearer of the lance was at liberty to save himself by flight once he had taken a life, while he who "carried the arrow" must remain pinned to his post until dead or victorious.

Carson watched other warriors file in to complete the circle. They were dark of skin and heavily-built, quite unlike the slender and lighter-colored tribes farther north. These were the representatives of the Yapahe, the miltary society of the Kiowas and the most efficient fighting machine the plains ever saw. Carson knew the Kiowas to be the most bloodthirsty of the Western tribes, and probably responsible for more dead whites, considering their numbers, than any other tribe west of the Mississippi. The Kaitsenki, he knew, was limited to ten members, whose military vow pledged them to remain in the first line of battle and never to retreat.

As soon as the circle was filled there ensued several minutes of silence, which was broken by Heart-Eater calling for a pipe. This was lighted and passed 'round the circle. After the pipe had returned to the chief he rose and said:

"The Kiowas know the white men have brought them sickness and death and are killing off the buffalo. Now comes this white man who says he comes to trade. He must be a very foolish man to enter a Kiowa war-party, for the pipe was given to lead the Kiowas against white men. The Kiowas are on their way to kill white men to make their medicine strong. My brothers have sharp eyes like the eagle. Can they see bales of goods or kegs of strong-water? Ten-Piakia's eyes must be growing dull, for he can see nothing."

"The spirit of Heart-Eater should see what his eyes do not see," serenely responded Carson. "Perhaps the head man of the Kaitsenko grew blind when his medicine grew weak. I have heard many voices talk about the mighty Dohasan, great chief of the Kiowas, but no one along the Sese p'a hoan* seems to have heard of Ten-Piakia."

This insolent speech brought the chief to his feet, struggling in black fury. He thrust forward first his right and then his left leg, causing the curious fringe of tiny bones that extended the full length of his thigh leggings to rattle, and hoarsely proclaimed—

"Look, white man! These are the finger bones of Indians I have killed in battle."

And he smote his left leg.

"Look at these! These are the finger bones of white men I have killed."

And he struck his right leg.

"And the bones of Mexican dogs I have slain I give to my squaws."

Realizing the lust for blood must be quelled before he could make a bargain Carson laughed lightly and rested his hand on his rifle as it lay across his lap. Heart-Eater's small eyes glowed with murder. Mastering himself by a mighty effort he lighted the pipe. After taking a whiff and casting a significant glance at Carson's right hand fondling the gun he spoke in the language of the Apache, their ancient allies, saying—

"When he takes the pipe."

Carson, who thoroughly understood the Apache tongue, knew the climax had come. When he took the pipe his hand must leave the rifle. He felt the warrior on his right shifting his position and knew a bronzed hand was reaching for a weapon. The pipe passed slowly, each brave puffing it ceremoniously. When it was within two warriors of Carson he slipped his left hand under his hunting-shirt. When the warrior next to him inhaled the smoke and was preparing to pass it the frontiersman drew forth the "man" *taime* and carelessly tossed it to Heart-Eater, saying:

"The Big-Little-Man comes to trade. This is some of his goods. Tell your warrior to take his hand from his knife. His medicine is weak. He can not kill me when next I smoke the pipe."

The circle remained paralyzed for fully sixty seconds. Then came a gasp of astonishment. From the tail of his eye Carson saw the warrior at his side hastily fold his empty hands before him.

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*Kiowa name for Santa Fé Trail—"Arkansas River Road." Literally, "Arrowhead River Road."

"Where did the Big-Little-Man get this?" asked Heart-Eater, his tone humble.

"From some cowardly Osage," informed Carson. "I killed several, then cut a stick and switched the rest away from the Canadian."

Every savage eye glared at him as the circle in frantic anxiety awaited for the next query and its answer. The chief asked—

"Did Big-Little-Man get anything else from the Osage?"

Carson yawned.

"Yes; the 'woman' and the 'bear' *taime*. Those are what I have to trade. The 'man' *taime* is a gift to the Kiowa to prove Big-Little-Man's tongue is straight."

"Let us see the 'woman' and 'bear' *taime*," demanded Ansote.

Carson smiled derisively.

"Big-Little-Man would indeed be *adalkai* to bring them here. He knows the Kiowas. They are hidden one dark* from here."

"The Kiowas will trade. One hundred ponies?" eagerly offered Ansote.

"Does the *taime* keeper think Big-Little-Man is a Crow brave, trading ermine-skin and elks' teeth?" scornfully retorted Carson.

"Name the price. If the Kiowa Nation has it, it shall be given," declared Heart-Eater.

"The 'woman' and 'bear' *taime* will be traded for an old white man and a white girl."

GLANCES of consternation passed 'round the circle.

"But the Kiowas have no white prisoners," expostulated the chief.

"Not here. But the white men you go to fight have them," explained Carson.

Heart-Eater pondered this answer thoughtfully; then said:

"Big-Little-Man asks the Kiowas to capture the old man and the young squaw from the bad white men. This medicine-arrow shall be planted in the middle of their camp. The Kaitsenko die but never run from battle. If the Kiowa had not gone to attack the bad whites the Osage could not have stolen the medicine. We will kill them all."

Carson smiled at the naïveté of this reasoning, then held up a hand for silence and impressively said:

"Listen; this is what the Kiowas must do to get their *taime* back. Travel to the North Canadian and you will find where white men surprized a small village of Kiowas and were turned back by Big-Little-Man and his friends. You will send scouts to follow them; for they are bad and will try to reach the camp of their friends, the bad whites by the river.

"Now, listen; they must not get by you. Your scouts must come and tell you in time for you to cut between them and the camp. You will leave half your warriors where the Kiowas were saved by Big-Little-Man and his friends. The rest of the Kiowas must ride after me and my friends and drive us into the camp. You will fire at us and not hit us. We will fire at you and not hit you. After we enter the camp you will surround it on all sides except towards the rising sun.

"You will not make any attack until you see two smokes rising from the camp, then you are to rush the west side and kill all the bad whites you can. You must hold all the whites before you by your brave fighting. While you are doing this my friends will help me get the old man and girl away to the east in the wagon. When we start you will send two warriors to follow us—two and no more. They shall receive the *taime* and bring them back to you. But none of the bad whites are to follow us."

After the chief had absorbed these directions he inquired—

"What shall the Kiowas do if the white men up the river are too strong for our warriors and break through."

"Then your scouts must ride to you and tell you and you will send all but a few of your force stationed 'round the camp to go up the river and help drive them back. They must not break through."

Again Heart-Eater ran this through his mind until he had arranged it properly, and agreed:

"It shall be so. Big-Little-Man swears by his gods to give the *taime* back if he leaves the camp with the man and woman?"

"He will so swear. He will give the *taime* back after he and his friends have ridden a safe distance from camp, followed only by the two Kiowa warriors. Has he not already brought you the 'man' *taime?* Now Heart-Eater shall swear by the Sun, the Buffalo and the Peyote plant to keep his word."

The chief gave an order and an aged warrior, the oldest in the tribe, brought forward a small, scalp-fringed pouch, which no

*Kiowa reckoned distance by "darks" instead of "sleeps."

man ever was permitted to open, a buffalo bull's skull, and the dried flower of the peyote, or mescal plant. Carson crossed to the chief and sank on his heels and arranged the sacred objects; the pouch, symbolic of the sun; the skull, emblematic of the strength and majesty of the sun as reflected in the animal world; the peyote, the circular disk of which was the vegetal symbol of the sun. Taking great care that the chief's hand should rest on each of the symbols Carson briefly repeated the terms of their compact; and Heart-Eater, in the presence of his leading warriors, solemnly swore to keep the faith. In turn Carson raised his hand and took oath to his own honesty of purpose.

The frontiersman had accomplished all that was humanly possible. Yet he was not convinced the Kiowas would keep faith should they detect a chance to gain the *taime* by a short-cut. They worshiped many gods and found them in all phenomena of nature, and yet believed in no one supreme spirit. They believed in no future of reward and punishment, and their most binding oaths would hold them to the bond only so long as it suited their convenience. The Comanche, who were unique in possessing no tribal medicine and who were the agnostics of the Western Indians, were infinitely more to be trusted than these dark, stocky warriors, whose one redeeming virtue was bravery in battle.

And above and beyond all else Carson believed they would consider their medicine to be weak so long as a white man lived who had profaned it by his touch. However, the oath would stay their hands from hasty murder, and could Carson manage to join the camp unharmed he trusted to his astuteness to win clear of both red and white. Of one advantage he was assured; the Kiowas would lose no time in throwing a barrier between Young Mexico and the Red Jaguar.

"You will not ride within rifle-shot of me," he directed as he passed out of the teepee. "Tell all your warriors what they are to do; for if any get within rifle-shot before I reach the camp I shall shoot to kill. When I stop, you will stop."

"The bad white men will kill you. Then the Kiowas will not get back their medicine," Heart-Eater bethought himself to say.

"They will not dare kill us, as they will want our rifles to help them fight off the Kiowas. If the Kiowas give up the fight before we escape with the wagon, then they will kill us and kill the *taime*."

"The Kaitsenko die, but never run from battle," was the sententious reply.

And in this regard Carson knew he could believe the chief without stint.

Mounting his horse he rode away and the Indians caught their ponies and made ready for the mock pursuit. Swiftly mounted scouts hurried off at right-angles to his course to seek signs of the Jaguar's men. When Carson estimated he was well beyond rifle-range he waved his hat, and at the signal the war-party split in two, half following the scouts, the remainder following him. And the latter band rode with punctilious care not to come within reach of the frontiersman's rifle.

CHAPTER VI

HOW BLANCHE FOUND HER LOVER

DANE alone kept glancing back as the three rode for the river. Carson and Williams were only concerned with what lay ahead. The sailor was dealing with a new experience and was hypnotized by the wide fringe of warriors silently sweeping on behind him, just out of rifle-range.

"Big party," commented Carson on observing his companions' tense interest. "As many more are riding to stop the Jaguar."

Old Williams looked back lazily, then faced to the front and with a reminiscent chuckle asked—

"Remember, Kit, when we was making for the rendezvous on Green River and a raw cub from Bent's threw us into a uproar by giving the alarm when it wa'n't nothing but a herd of elk?"

"I've been fooled the same way," confessed Carson. "Only I kept it to myself. Elk stringing out at a distance look for all the world like redskins mounted."

Williams reined in and pointed to a smudge of smoke and warned—

"There's the camp!"

"I'll wait till we make the next ridge; then I'll signal for them to pick up speed. They've spotted it."

The Kiowas, although far in the rear, had discovered the smoke as soon as the whites had, and under the tutelage of Heart-Eater began whooping. Carson spurred up the ridge but was unable to see

the camp owing to another ridge between him and the river-bottom. But skirting this next ridge and approaching at right angles to his course was a horse and rider; and the frontiersman cried out in astonishment.

"Mr. Dane!" he sharply called over his shoulder. "Hustle up here and see if you recognize this young lady."

With a choking cry Dane galloped madly to Carson's side, and after one glance, gave a yell and dashed down the slope, waving his hat and bellowing like a madman. The woman on the horse reined in and stared at the three men for a moment, then began screaming, "Ellery Dane! Ellery Dane!" and endeavored to force her mount forward. But the horse was badly blown and could scarcely more than walk. Carson and Williams remained on the ridge to check the advance of the Indians. They saw Dane fling himself from the saddle and rush to the woman, then both turned and watched the Indians.

"I reckon, Kit, they know each other," old Williams dryly observed.

"I reckon," murmured Carson. "She's Miss West, his sweetheart. But what is she doing out here on a spent horse?"

"Her uncle's probably rubbed out and she escaped."

"Then we must change our plans. Hi! Dane! Come here at once." This without looking toward the amorous couple. "Pop, lovers never realize anything but their particular business of making love! And I'm sweating blood for fear Young Mexico's band may come tearing 'round that ridge at any minute. Between them and the Kiowas we'd stand about as much show as a dead bear when a young buck counts coup by striking him with his bow. Now we'll soon know the worst."

The last as Dane came riding up with a tired, golden-haired little woman seated behind him with her arms about his waist.

"It's Blanche!" Dane joyously cried to his friends.

"We reckoned as much," said old Bill, his bearded lips twisting into a grin.

Carson dismounted and helped the girl to the ground. When Dane spoke his name she caught both his hands and clung to them eagerly. Carson surveyed her from the crown of her wonderful head to the tips of her moccasins and told himself Dane had a marvelous eye for a sailor.

"Oh, Mr. Carson, I've just prayed I'd find you," she said with a sob in her voice.

"That's the ticket, young woman! I've caught more beaver and traded more robes through prayer than ever I did with traps and raw alcohol," eagerly informed Williams, the old fanatical expression glazing his gray eyes.

"And I've wanted to find you, *señorita*. But how is it you are out here alone? And how did you know I was in these parts?"

"Uncle was sick. One of the men pointed to a plant and said if I could find some of them and steeped them they'd help him. I was in the edge of the woods, on my knees grubbing for one, when Mexico, our wagon-boss, halted near me and talked with Jacks, a one-eyed man. I heard him cursing 'Kit Carson.' From their talk I knew he met you near the camp when he called on the men to catch some one. He had reported to uncle it was an Indian, trying to run off our animals. Their talk astounded me, made me awfully afraid. I kept very quiet. From what they next said I feared uncle's life was in danger as well as mine. Mexico swore he'd bothered long enough with passengers, and that his plan 'to wait' till he reached Mad Woman's Creek was spoiled by your appearance. Jacks insisted 'it wouldn't be safe' till you were out of the way. Then Mexico said, 'We must quit the wagon and break through and join the Jaguar.' Jacks asked, 'The old man?' "

She paused and clutched at her throat, unable to go on.

"Mexico answered he reckoned to leave your uncle behind?" prompted Carson.

She nodded, then gasped out:

"Yes, leave him behind. I was to go along with them."

"—— them for low-down skunks!" snarled Dane.

"Amen!" loudly approved old Williams.

"Go on, *señorita*," urged Carson.

"They walked away. I could not face them. There was a horse tied just east of the wagon. None of the men were at that end of the grove. I felt as if you must be near, Mr. Carson. I led the horse downstream. It seemed cruel and cowardly, but I couldn't think of any other way to help uncle. I climbed into the saddle and rode east till I could strike south between two ridges without being seen from the camp. And I've ridden ever since. Then the horse

gave out, and although I went miles and miles from the camp I saw nothing of you. I was completely discouraged. That's all."

Carson gazed in pity at her haggard face. She had ridden in a half-circle, and if he had not intercepted her she would have ended her flight in sight of the camp.

Williams began a speech of foreordination, but the girl cut him short by giving a shriek and clinging convulsively to Dane. Her pale face was tragic with horror and was turned toward the waiting line of Indians, having observed them for the first time.

"It's all right," soothed Carson. "We knew they were there. They won't come any nearer. Mr. Dane will talk with you while Mr. Williams and I chew over the situation."

After drawing aside Carson tersely asked—

"Does her coming change our plans any?"

Old Williams frowned.

"We've got her," he slowly said. "That's the main thing we come for. If it wasn't for the Indians we could dust out till it was safe to send her on alone with the boy."

"Which would mean only when we had them inside of Santa Fé," snapped Carson. "A mighty fine young man, but he's as helpless out here as I would be on a ship at sea. Besides, the Kiowas would never quit our trail. I've got to keep my word and give them the *taime*. Even if I did that, they'd press on, to rub us out. Ansote will never forgive us so long as he lives for handling their sacred medicine. Red Jaguar and Kiowas up-stream. Young Mexico and his men down-stream. The rest of the Kiowa Nation between us and the South Canadian. Alone, you and I could probably make it. But with those two innocents, and shy a horse, we'd be overhauled before morning. No; it won't do. The game must be played as it lays."

Arriving at this decision he returned to the young people and briefly directed:

"*Señorita*, we're going to your camp. It is near. The Indians will chase us and shoot and we shall shoot back, but no one will be harmed. When we reach camp you'll tell Mexico and the men that you took the horse to ride down the river after herbs, that you saw some Indians and became afraid and rode blindly behind some ridges and became lost. As your horse gave out we came along chased by Indians an picked you up. You are not to let any one know you ever saw Mr. Dane before, nor to mention him to your uncle. All ready!"

Dane helped the girl on to his horse but Carson saw at a glance the sailor would have difficulty in carrying her to camp, and advised:

"Sorry for you, Mr. Dane, but I must take the young lady. We ride at top speed. Pardon me, *señorita*."

And without waiting for any protest from Dane he swung the girl before him, holding her gently and easily.

"Catch up! All's set? Stretch out."

And he turned and gave the impatient and puzzled Kiowas the signal and clapped spurs to his horse.

The girl closed her eyes as Carson's magnificent steed tore down the rough slope, and shivered as the fearful war-whoop advertised their pursuit.

YOUNG MEXICO, wild with rage at the mysterious disappearance of the girl, pulled at his light curly hair as scout after scout returned and reported failure.

"You —— curs!" he fumed, his eyes cowering them with their basilisk glare. "A blind man could follow her trail. You're not worth the powder to shoot you to ——! You got scared of meeting a Injun. What'll Red Jaguar say if he comes and finds her gone?"

This question while leaving the men quaking with terror aroused him to his own danger.

"We done what we could, Boss," mumbled One-Eyed Jacks.

With a yell of rage Young Mexico struck the speaker in the face with the butt of a heavy dragoon pistol. Jacks was felled by the blow and Young Mexico, a devil now that he had let himself go, kicked the prostrate man repeatedly, spitting and screaming like a catamount. The spectators cringed but dared not interfere. Among them were several with gray beards, long used to wickedness; but there was none who could face the rage of Young Mexico when he was in a "killer's" temper.

"Ahoy the bridge! What's the row? Get below, you swabs, or I'll clean ship!" roared the captain from his couch in the wagon.

Young Mexico paused, his foot raised

for another kick. Slowly a hideous grin parted his thin lips. Modulating his voice to velvet smoothness he meekly replied:

"I was just coming to report, sir. Only a bit of harmless discipline, sir."

"You're the pilot. It's for me to enforce discipline," growled Captain West. "Lay to, and fetch your papers aboard."

"I'm coming, sir," politely replied Young Mexico, pulling a long knife and holding it with the blade extending up his arm. In a whisper he commanded the men, "Drag that carrion away. The girl's gone, and I'm sick of that old fool. I'll be back in a minute."

He had taken a dozen catlike steps toward the wagon, his lips still parted in noiseless laughter, when a loud cry of alarm diverted him from his bloody errand. As he turned about he caught the long-drawn war-whoop, pealing from scores of dusky throats.

"All ——'s loose, Boss!" bawled one of the outlaws.

Young Mexico gnashed his teeth and ordered:

"Stand them off! I'll be with you in a minute!"

"They're chasing white men. One's riding double! Boss! Boss! It's the gal!"

Thrusting the knife into his belt Young Mexico ran through the growth where his men were scattered to repulse the attack. He took in the situation at a glance, but could scarcely credit what he saw. He recognized Carson and Williams. Dane was simply a stranger. The captain's niece was riding in Carson's arms.

"The devil does look after his own," he muttered, taking a rifle from one of the men.

But as the wide-flung line of warriors topped a ridge and he beheld their great numbers a sickly feeling was born in his heart. The attack, if pressed in force, would overrun the camp as though it were made of pasteboard and its defenders of wood. As he watched, Dane and Williams turned in their saddles and fired and savages vanished from their ponies. Carson, encumbered by the girl, reached out and exchanged guns with Williams and managed to reload the empty weapon, and doing it with a celerity and dexterity that brought a grunt of admiration and envy from the observer.

"They come in, don't they, Boss? We'll need their extry rifles," cried one of the band.

"Of course, you fool! Let no one fire till I give the word. The Injuns already are hauling up."

On rushed the three horses in a white lather. Back and forth raced the Kiowas just out of range. In another minute the panting horses smashed into the undergrowth, and Carson was afoot, pistol in hand, and facing Young Mexico, crying:

"There's a little million more of 'em back on the trail. Truce, or fight?"

Young Mexico threw up his empty hands, and with a laugh replied:

"We need your guns. You need ours. We'll see it through together."

"All right. We picked the girl up a few miles out. Lost. Horse spoiled. Thought she was chased by the reds."

He turned back to mingle with the defenders on the edge of the timber and was just in time to catch Dane by the arm and twirl him about as he made to follow the girl to the wagon.

"Are you crazy? You never met Miss West before. Her uncle must not see you," he warned.

"I forgot myself. I'll keep below deck," meekly promised Dane.

Old Williams spoke up—

"Injuns reckon they won't rush us, Kit, till they've had a smoke-talk and made some new medicine."

"Then I won't be needed for a bit," decided Carson, turning back to where Young Mexico was listening to Blanche's recital of her adventures. Breaking in on her narrative Carson curtly announced, "I'll look at Cap'n West. The young lady says he is sick, that it was while trying to find some roots that she became lost."

The bandit leader opened his mouth to forbid this, thought better of it and walked with Carson to the wagon. The girl went on ahead, and they halted for a moment while the captain rejoiced:

"Sink me, lass, but it brings new life to see you again! Where have you cruised? What did you log? Show your papers."

She was beginning her explanation when Carson poked his head through the end of the wagon and motioned her to step aside. A square red rind of a face, wrathful at the intrusion, glared at the frontiersman.

"Who's this beach-comber? Put him in irons," roared the captain, reaching for something to hurl at his visitor.

"Oh, uncle, he saved me from the Indians," cried the girl, her head appearing at the opening.

"My name is Carson. Your niece says you're under the weather. I'm a bit used to doctoring mules and sick folks. What have you been eating?"

The captain's choler vanished, and as there was something compelling in the calm, direct gaze he fretfully replied:

"Nothing but buffalo meat. Bully good, too. Never had such feed afloat. Next cruise I'm going to take a few bar'ls salted down."

"And you'll enjoy it," heartily assured Carson. "But just now you must eat something else. You have *le mal de vache*—cow-sickness. You've eaten too much fat cow meat. Stick to hardtack, gruel, jerked beef and coffee for a few days and you'll be all right."

"To think of striking a doctor in these waters! What did you say your name is?"

"Carson. Kit Carson."

"Hopping Neptune! Why, man alive, I've heard of you from the Columbia to the Horn. Well, I'll be ——!"

"Not if you quit eating cow meat."

"Huh? Ho! Ho! A joke!" And the captain shook and rumbled with laughter. Then soberly, "But it's all wrong. It's as mixed up as if I saw the Cross alongside the North Star."

"I don't understand." Carson feared the man's mind was wandering.

Struggling to one elbow the Captain surveyed the frontiersman long and earnestly, then dropped back and explained:

"I saw your picter in a story paper once. You was jumping across a mighty wide river. You was as tall as a tree. A dozen dead Injuns was scattered 'round you. Why, seeing you is like finding a cap'n's gig that's v'y'ged to both poles!"

Carson laughed and told the girl to mix the patient some gruel. Then to Young Mexico, who had been an interested spectator—

"You and I will now have a palaver."

As he spoke he turned and motioned for the outlaw to come away from the wagon.

"You roll in here to save your skin and then talk —— high and mighty," hissed Young Mexico as he followed the slim figure.

"It's because I've got the whip-hand," murmured Carson without looking back.

"Whip-hand? How?"

"You're counting on the Jaguar to send you help. I happen to know he can't do it."

Young Mexico could not control his smooth features, fear and hate distorting them. With a catlike spring he was at Carson's shoulder, saying—

"You lie!"

He had scarcely spoken before Carson was facing him, the muzzle of his dragoon pistol pressing against the outlaw's heart.

"Swallow your words," gently advised the frontiersman.

YOUNG MEXICO could not withstand the fury blazing between the half-closed eyes. He knew the "kill" signs.

"I swallow 'em," he huskily complied.

"Good," was the quiet endorsement, and the pistol dropped through the belt. "The whole Kiowa Nation is between you and your friend, the Jaguar."

"But how does that give you the whip-hand. I'm surrounded by the reds—so are you and your friends."

"So long as the redskins know I and my friends are alive they'll keep their distance. They want us alive. They won't risk a fight for fear of rubbing us out. We've got their *taime* medicine safely hidden. We'd be of no use to them dead."

"The devil!" And Young Mexico did not attempt to conceal his admiration. Quickly, however, a cunning gleam came into his eyes, and he exulted, "If that's the game I'll soon have my beaver pressed and packed."

"No; it won't work at all," coolly dissuaded Carson. "Before you make us prisoners you're bound to lose quite a few men. But say you could press, pack and deliver. How much trade would you make?"

"They'd quit the fight once they had you."

"You'd trust a Kiowa?" And Carson laughed amusedly. "Their word would be about as good as yours, you hell-cat. Now listen with both ears; the Jaguar can't help you. If either of my friends, including the Wests, come to any harm the Kiowas know they will never see their tribal medicine again. But suppose you could and did hand us over alive to them. I'd still hold the whip-hand over you. For I would say,

'Bring me that dog's head; drag the heads of his men if you want your *taime*.' Well?"

Young Mexico drew in a deep breath, his face white with heat. Then he exclaimed—

"I reckon you win, —— you!"

He turned and glided back to his men.

"We win a breathing spell only," murmured Carson, gazing after the lithe form. "For Red Jaguar will break through in time. No redskin can beat a white man who knows the game."

He walked through the grove and found the men on the alert, expecting to be rushed at any minute. The Indians remained out of range and had ceased their yelping. Old Williams grinned and nodded toward one bandit whose strained visage testified to tense nerves, and winked elaborately. Dane came up to whisper anxious queries about Blanche.

Carson assured him she was safe for the time being, and added:

"Go near the wagon and pretend to be on guard. I'll send her to you. But be careful your meeting isn't— Well, make it like that of strangers. When sure you're not overheard ask her to get and give to you the paper her uncle carries. Just so long as she or her uncle has it, then just so long are they inviting death. Once we get it we'll have something to trade to the outlaws."

Dane nodded and rejoined Williams. Carson strolled by the wagon and thrust his head through the opening to give the captain a cheery word. The old man was asleep. Blanche was busy at a small fire nearby. Carson carelessly joined her and told her where she would find Dane; but warned her to remember she and he were strangers to each other. Next he explained his desire to get possession of the paper.

"I can get it," she promptly replied. "Uncle told me where he hid it in the wagon when he was taken sick and thought he was going to die. I'll carry it to Ellery."

Leaving her he proceeded through the camp to the one front he had not inspected —the river-bank. He studied the current for some minutes, and decided that while it was quite an effectual bar to an Indian attack it could not prevent the Jaguar's men from reaching the camp, provided they could shake off the Kiowas and ford the river up-stream. Instead of being an asset to his plans the river was a weakness.

His meditations were disturbed by the sight of something floating toward the shore. He watched it with grave interest as it answered the caprices of an eddy, now advancing, now swirling away. Nor did he remove his gaze when the bushes rustled behind him.

"Does Señor Carson find the Red Jaguar's tracks in the water?" asked a sneering voice.

"Not yet," was the low reply. "But he sees something that tells him the beaver a few miles up-stream were not disturbed by the passing of red or white men up to, say, two hours ago."

And bending over he scooped up a twig of willow, partially gnawed by beaver teeth, and examined the bark carefully.

Turning he held it out to Young Mexico, his gaze shining with triumph.

"There are beaver near a patch of willows a few miles above," he explained. "This twig shows nothing has happened within several hours to disturb them. It looks as though the Jaguar's whelps have been whipped and sent home."

The bandit struck the twig from his hand and with an oath turned and plunged through the bushes. Carson smiled in deep content. He knew the Kiowas were impatiently waiting for him to make two smokes, the signal for them to attack. But every hour gained saw the captain advanced toward recovery and simplified the work of rescue. Although not ready to make the smoke signal he did take advantage of his seclusion to collect two mounds of inflammable débris. On these he would throw grass when the crucial hour struck. He had completed this preparation and was meditating his plans for the morrow when Williams crashed through the undergrowth, calling out:

"Been looking for you everywheres, Kit. There's a one-eyed cuss in this outfit that's sore on the job. Just as sure as whisky's bringing five dollers a pint he's plumb mad at the gang."

"One-Eyed Jacks. Probably Mexico has told him to play off and pretend he wants to desert to us, hoping we'll take him in and tell him our plans."

"Perhaps," admitted Williams. "But his mouth is smashed to pieces and some of his front teeth are caved in. Told me under his breath he had it in for Mexico. If it ain't a game I reckon he'll be keen to

pay the full shot to that bloody young pup before he's shet of the Canadian."

"I'll look him over," said Carson. "If he's what he seems——"

He ceased speaking to stare at the river. Then with a quick glance he surveyed the bush growth back of him. Satisfied he was unobserved he slipped into the stream and waded out a rod and salvaged something from the water.

"What in the name of the prophets have you got?" hoarsely whispered old Williams.

Carson wrung the water from the legs of his buckskin breeches and then displayed his find—a broken arrow-shaft.

"Kiowa feathering," grunted Williams.

"Then they've met Red Jaguar. They've had a fight some distance above the beaver village at the willows. Something is going to break mighty soon, Pop. I hate to take that wagon along, but we can't leave the old man and he's too weak to ride a horse."

"My medicine tells me we shall git clear of this trap, but that we sha'n't git clear of the Jaguar till later. For it's foreordained I'm to preach over his grave——"

A sharp, metallic report, a single rifle-shot up-stream closed the old man's mouth, and Carson cried—

"That didn't come from any redskin's gun!"

The camp behind them was now in commotion, and as they hurried through the timber they heard Young Mexico rejoicing—

"They've busted through! They're coming!"

Fearing disaster, Carson rushed to the edge of the thicket, old Williams trotting at his heels, his underjaw thrust forward and his whiskers bristling. Dane came on a run from the direction of the wagon. The bandits from behind bush and tree were excitedly watching a small cloud of dust up the river trail.

"The Red Jaguar?" slowly spoke up One-Eyed Jacks, enunciating thickly through his swollen lips.

"One of his men. There is only one rider," corrected Carson as he studied the swirl of dust. And his face lost its tension.

Jacks' remaining orb glittered ferociously. From the corner of his mouth he whispered:

"That —— Mexico done me dirt! Count on me when it comes to the show-down!"

"I'll give you a chance to mend your teeth," promised Carson.

Now the rider dropped into a hollow and remained hidden for several minutes. Carson began to believe he would not reappear, but at last he topped the ridge, riding like mad and prone on his horse.

"Stand ready to cover him, boys!" yelled Young Mexico. "A messenger from Red Jaguar! The Jaguar will come busting through next!"

The men began shouting wild encouragement to the horseman, but before he had finished the descent of the ridge several warriors came skimming down the slope behind him, shooting arow after arrow as they rode.

"Hell's fiends! Run out and meet him. Get into action!" screamed Young Mexico.

Before the man could advance from cover the top of the ridge was bristling with savage heads, as the Kiowas waited to charge any attempt at rescue. And there came a death-yell from the lone rider as he bumped to the ground, a veritable pincushion.

Sobbing and swearing, Young Mexico raised his rifle and fired. His men followed his example. Unmindful of the volley, several warriors rode up to the prostrate figure and leaped to the ground. When they remounted and rode back up the ridge to rejoin their exulting companions more than one bandit blenched. There was none who missed the significance of the small object bouncing and bobbing behind the pony of the first warrior to count coup.

"They seem to be dragging his head," remarked old Williams.

CHAPTER VII

HOW CARSON KEPT THE WHIP-HAND

YOUNG MEXICO was in the devil's own temper. The death of the messenger left him more perplexed than if the Jaguar had not attempted to send the man through. He feared his chief had given up the plan of uniting their forces. And yet the Jaguar always worked his will and made his sinister presence felt even when miles away in the Sangre de Cristo range. He might appear at any moment: he might cold-bloodedly wait for the Indians to complete their work. The last thought was permissible because Young

Mexico had had secret aspirations to supreme command of the band.

This possibility of having been abandoned to his fate did not, however, stand four-square with Mexico's appraisal of his superior. In all his terrible history Red Jaguar was never known to take a vicarious revenge. Punishment of highest or lowest was never inflicted by deputy. Men sometimes deserted his red standard. Never were posses sent after them; but there were creepy stories of a tall, silent figure, muffled in a blanket, arousing the delinquent by his lonely camp-fire, of gruesome reminders being brought back to the mountain fastness and exhibited on poles to deter others on desertion bent. This personal vengeance and the conviction a man would be overtaken and the inexorable sentence carried out was the key to the Jaguar's power.

So Young Mexico feared the unknown and sought to smother his apprehensions by nursing blind rage to white heat. The old man and the girl, Carson and his friends were encompassed by his hate. There was but one way out of his predicament, assuming he was to receive no aid from his chief; dispose of the old man, throw the girl on a horse and make a dash for it under cover of darkness. This demanded a reconsideration of Carson's status. He began to perceive that Carson's immunity benefited Carson and his friends only. The frontiersman would not tarry in camp once he knew Red Jaguar was coming. If the Jaguar did not come he would slip away some night, leaving the Kiowas free to massacre the outlaws.

He brooded over it as he sat apart from his watchful band, and at last called to him a trusted lieutenant, a ferocious gray-beard answering to the name of "Comanche Joe," and briefly outlined the situation to him.

"Carson bluffed me with his talk about the Kiowas' medicine," he explained in summing up. "How do I know he's got it? He didn't bring it with him, for we've searched his traps. But s'pose it is true and that he has it hid somewhere; what's to become of us if the Kiowas up-river join those out there behind the ridge and raid us?"

"We can tie 'em up an' trade 'em to the Injuns. Their hides is just as good to us as the medicine would be."

Young Mexico recalled his conversation with the frontiersman, in which the latter averred he would demand the outlaws' head should the Kiowas capture him and seek to make him surrender the *taime*, and shook his head moodily.

"I'd rather rub out the three of them, leave the wagon, and make a break down-river. Our horses are rested. The most of us could get through if we started before more reds come up. The trail to the east is open."

"Leave the wagon, eh?" mused Comanche Joe, his eyes glittering. "That means leavin' the old cuss what's been callin' me a 'swab' ever since we started. If ye do that I ask to be the one to see him last. I'm for it. But there's one thing to be fixed first."

"What?"

"The paper the boys say he's got hid somewhere. The paper what shows where gold an' silver is hid."

"Of course. I'm not a fool. That comes first. We can take the girl, hang on to her long as we can, drop her when we have to. Then for the treasure."

"If the Jaguar has give any orders 'bout the gal—" mused Comanche.

"If he wanted her he oughter busted through to help us. A man can't do more'n he can," was the passionate retort.

"The chief is sometimes keerless 'bout his men," agreed Comanche. "There was 'Pecos Frank', allers willin' to take any chance. Rode off with the chief an' never come back. No one ever heard of him ag'in, an' no one ever dast ask the chief where he might be."

Young Mexico chuckled, and informed: "If you went under a certain ledge on the south side of the Raton Mountains, and had the nose of a timber-wolf, you'd find what's left of Pecos. He had a Mexican girl. Chief wanted her."

Comanche stroked his gray beard reflectively and remarked:

"They say his hate can chase a man an' find him no matter where he holes up. Still——"

Young Mexico pressed his companion's arm for silence and rose to his feet.

"One of the horses," he murmured, seating himself.

Both listened. The timber was quiet. Through the tops of the trees shone the Summer stars. The men were sleeping,

or standing guard. There came no sound from the Kiowas beyond the ridge.

"You was saying," whispered Mexico.

Comanche laughed uneasily and continued:

"I was sayin' that some of the boys reckon it's as well to have a man's hate follerin' 'em as to drop out of sight the way Pecos did. This is a big country. Up North, if a feller could git in good with the Sioux, the whole United States couldn't bother him."

"There's enough places to hide in, but the pickings are down here. I thought you might be saying something else."

"Like what?" puzzled Comanche.

Mexico glanced sidewise at his companion, but the night foiled him. Comanche interpreted the pause correctly, however, and gasped at the audacity of it.

"That, eh?" he grunted.

"It would be very simple," murmured Mexico. "Much better to have the Chief shift his diggings."

"But who'd do it?"

"You'n me. We trust each other. He's only human. A few inches of your knife, or a ball from my pistol. Simple enough. Trouble would be to know on how many of the men we could count. Of course we can count on the men in this band."

"All?"

"What do you mean?"

"What 'bout One-Eyed Jacks?"

"That rabbit! He'll eat out of my hand." This contemptuously.

"Wal, I wouldn't trust him any farther than I can heave a bull buf'ler by the tail."

"On account of what happened when he didn't find the girl's trail? Bah! He's a dog to be kicked about by any man that's his betters. If I reckoned there was anything in what you say I'd hunt him down now and rip him open."

Comanche rose, urging:

"Then just let me try him. I'll let on I'm blood mad at ye. I'll make him think I'm plannin' on duckin' out. See if he don't 'grec to go with me."

"He hasn't got the nerve. He's o'n'ery. If we could corral that treasure we could get a gang 'round us in no time. You'd be my right hand man. The Jaguar sticks on too long. The game is to make a few big killings, then break to Mexico. But you try Jacks out while I'm figgering how to get the old man's paper."

Comanche rose, whispering:

"As to gettin' the paper. When I was herdin' with the Comanches I l'arned a few tricks on how to make a man give up. If ye fail, call me in."

With that he found his rifle and stole through the timber, making for the barricade. Wnen near the end of the timber he stumbled over a pair of legs and received a poke from the muzzle of a rifle that fairly knocked the wind from his vicious body. And the deep voice of Williams snarled:

"Where do you think you be? On the Alameda? Step on my feet again and I'll brain you."

Cursing faintly Comanche cocked his rifle, the blood lust drowning his senses, but he was recalled to himself by a low voice drawling:

"Move on, my man. Don't let that gun go off. I've got you lined."

HE RECOGNIZED Carson as the speaker, and with a mouthful of strangled oaths he passed on. He searched almost the entire length of the lines before he found Jacks, who was behind a bush several rods in advance of the barricade. Comanche ascertained his identity without passing beyond the barrier, and softly invited:

"Come here a minute, Jacks. Somethin' to tell ye."

"Comanche, eh?" growled Jacks, stealing back. "What's up?"

"Got to have a talk with ye afore mornin'. See here, Jacks, ye'n me is friends. It hurt me sore when the boss mauled ye so onmerciful. There's half a dozen of the boys that think as I do, that the boss is gittin' too free with his manners. We reckon that if we can git that piece of paper we can quit this bunch an' cut out the treasure an' be our own bosses."

"Erhuh?" mumbled Jacks, drawing closer.

"After the Jaguar's got his share—an' him not doin' a tap of work—there'll be only a three-days' drunk for ye'n' me. I'm bankin' on not makin' any mistake in thinkin' ye're with us."

Jacks chuckled hideously.

"Comanche, old pard, I must whisper it. Even the trees have ears."

He found Comanche's arm and drew him closer, and with his lips close to the outlaw's bearded face he informed:

"Sure I'll be in it. I went back to the timber tonight to kill him. He heard me an' thought I was a hoss. I know ye for what ye be. I know what the boss don't dream of. An' heard all yer palaver."

With a howl of fear Comanche threw up his rifle and caught the descending knife on the barrel. The two came to a clinch, with Comanche now dropping his gun for his own long blade. A light flared up behind them and Carson called out:

"This way, men! Two fools fighting."

As Carson leaped forward, swinging a torch above his head one of the combatants fell with a cough, the other sprang back into the growth. Young Mexico, followed by several of his men, ran up. The light of the torch fell on the bruised features of One-Eyed Jacks, and the bandit leader howled an oath and aimed his pistol. Carson dashed the weapon aside, the bullet striking a tree.

"What's the game?" cried one of the men.

"This dog has killed Comanche, the best man I ever had!" yelled Mexico. "Look 'round for him in the bushes. This skunk was planning to throw us down and Comanche caught him at it!"

With a rumbling roar of rage the men advanced on the prostrate man but Carson intervened, his pistol waving them back. One-Eyed Jacks, bleeding to death from a gaping wound in the throat, glared up into the infuriated leader's face and twisted his swollen lips into an awful smile.

"Hear that?" he croaked.

They heard it, the hurried passage of a horse making for the river. And still they did not comprehend.

"He's done for me,——him; an' yet I want him to git away. He's a fordin' the river by this time." Then in an explosion of angry triumph he cried out at Young Mexico, "Ye poor fool! The 'best man ye ever had' was Red Jaguar's spy, an' I heard ye tell him yer plans for rubbin' out the chief."

Then came the death-rattle.

Speechless with rage Young Mexico would have stamped on the sneering countenance had not the frontiersman hurled him aside. The leader turned wild of visage to search for Comanche Joe, but Carson halted him by explaining to the men—

"Comanche Joe tried to tempt Jacks to go with him—and a few others—and get a hidden treasure."

Instantly the gang's suspicions flared up. Each knew he was not one of the conspirators, and each believed his neighbor was. There was a general drawing apart; and although Young Mexico was torn with wrath and fear and believed it vital that Comanche Joe be run down and exterminated before he could report to the Jaguar he dared not leave the situation while the wolfish glances were becoming focused on him. Carson remained standing in the middle of the maddened circle, holding the torch high.

"That dog lied!" hoarsely denounced Mexico, pointing to the lifeless Jacks. "I never planned to do the chief."

But he had proclaimed Comanche his best man and Carson had overheard the fugitive tempt Jacks; *ergo*, the chief must be the instigator of the treasure plot. The men began edging closer to their leader. Young Mexico realized his peril and with a malignant glance at Carson insisted:

"He lies, men! You all know why he and his friends have been allowed to live. He claims to know where the tribe medicine of the Kiowas is hid, and says none of us will get out alive if he or any of his friends are killed. Comanche was crooked, or he wouldn't have run away. Let him go. This is what you're to remember: the Jaguar hasn't brought us help. If the Kiowas up-stream join those behind the ridge and rush us in force we're all goners. I haven't any fight on with Red Jaguar. If I had it's none of your dish. To prove I'm on the square with you we'll take the old man's paper, leave him behind for the Kiowas to play with, put the girl on a horse and ride hell-bent for the treasure. I'll take the girl for my share of the stuff."

His words made a deep impression, especially his offer to forego his share of the bullion. The gang was shrewd enough to see he must stick with them to save his own scalp. Did he attempt any tricks later he could always be dealt with. As to any possible treachery on his part to the chief, why, that was purely a matter for him and the Jaguar to settle.

"Just add that you'll be chased and killed to a man if I or my friends are harmed," spoke up Carson. "So long as we are here, alive, the Kiowas won't attack. But do any dirty work and those of you we don't

wipe out in the scuffle will give their scalps, to be counted by stripes on the leggings of Kiowa squaws."

The pendulum swung back; the men staring at the speaker dubiously. Mexico saw they were weakening, and with a harsh laugh rebuked:

"Don't be fools. How can the Kiowas know whether they're all alive or not? He says he knows where the tribe's medicine is. We'll take him with us alive and the Kiowas will keep off. And when we get a breathing spell can't we find ways to make him tell where the *taime* is? Once we get it we can ride from one end of the Kiowa country to the other and never be touched." Wheeling on Carson he gloated, "You ain't holding the whip-hand now."

"The boss is right!" exploded one of the men. "We're actin' like a parcel of fools!"

"Good for you, Cayuse. You're coming to your senses." Then to Carson, "You'll ride with us. Try any more of your —— tricks, or shoot off any more gab, and I'll see what your insides is made of. Now, boys, we'll corral the paper and make a break at sunrise."

They moved in a body toward the wagon but were halted by the crack of a rifle across the river, followed by a scream of the death-stricken. Then came the exultant scalp-yell of the Kiowas, answered by triumphant cries from beyond the ridge. Young Mexico threw back his head and laughed in deep relief. The man Cayuse shivered and spoke for all when he babbled—

"They've raised Comanche's ha'r!"

"To work, boys," ordered Young Mexico, the heavy burden of fear dropping from him now he believed the spy had been trapped and killed after fording the river. "And Carson shall do the talking. If he can induce the old man to give up the paper we won't harm him."

But the expression of his smooth face belied his words and his men grinned in appreciation of his humor. Before they could advance a gun exploded in the direction of the wagon, followed by a sharp cry from Blanche. Some of the men began shouting it was a night attack and sprang to cover. Carson started to run to the wagon just as Dane and Williams came through the timber with Captain West walking between them, his steps uncertain but his face creased and seamed with rage. In his hands he carried a rifle. Behind the three men came the girl.

"Already planning to divide the swag, you mutineers!" shouted the old man, coming to a staggering halt in the torch-light and shaking his fist at the outlaws.

Dane caught the girl and held her by his side. Williams ran to join Carson.

Young Mexico, believing he had the game in his hands and eager to throw off all disguise, pulled a pistol and covered Carson, while his men leveled weapons at Dane and the captain. Then the situation was turned topsy-turvy by the captain bawling out:

"Who's got that paper? Who stole that paper? Come for'ard, you swine!"

"Cap'n West found his paper was took and fired a gun out the wagon," loudly explained Williams.

Carson smiled broadly at this turn of affairs and at the men's shift back to black suspicion. Young Mexico heard old Williams' speech in deep consternation, and slowly lowered his weapon. He glared about the circle in search of the culprit.

"Please calm yourself, Cap'n West," spoke up Carson. "These men are not what you paid them to be—an honest escort. They planned to steal your paper—and leave you behind. So I took it, and hid it; and in good time you shall have it back."

"It's true, uncle. Mr. Carson knows where it is. I tried to tell you, dear. Come back to the wagon and lie down," begged Blanche.

Stupefied, the captain gaped at Carson, then at the girl, and rubbed his head to dismiss his bewilderment. Dane turned him about, he not resisting, and aided by the girl led him away.

"We were talking about whip-hands," reminded Carson to the nonplussed leader. Then to the men, "If you behave yourselves we may trade. Now listen, and if any of you understand Kiowa you can interpret."

With that he left the dazed circle and advanced to the edge of the plain and waved the torch back and forth, and cried out:

"Big-Little-Man is talking. Is there one there to hear?"

From the top of the knoll near by came the answer—

"Big-Knife is the ears of the Kiowas."

This was interpreted by Cayuse, and Carson continued—

"Tell Heart-Eater the white men may try to ride down the river trail when the sun comes up and that Big-Little-Man says they must be stopped."

"Big-Knife will tell Ten-piakia. They shall be stopped."

The translation of this caused the outlaws to view Carson with awe, fear and hate; but fear predominated.

Young Mexico lost his head and flew at the frontiersman, screaming:

"Curse you! You ——"

Carson leaped to meet him, striking straight from the shoulder and knocking him senseless. Old Williams' rifle swung back and forth, covering the half-circle, seeking the first man to make a hostile move. Carson turned back toward the wagon, advising:

"When he comes to his senses better see that he behaves, or I shall kill him, or be killed. If I'm wiped out, all of you will die. Now, Pop, we'll turn in."

CHAPTER VIII

HOW THE *TAIME* WENT HOME

IT LACKED an hour of dawn and the outlaws were haggard from the night's worries. There was none who would not have relished murdering Carson and his two companions, and only fear held them back. The fact that the Kiowas had not attacked the camp compelled them to believe the frontiersman held a great influence over the Indians. His speech with Big-Knife in the night cemented such a conviction. All realized the situation could not continue, and there rose the fear that Carson might escape.

To guard against such a disaster none of the three was free of espionage for a minute from the time Carson felled Young Mexico insensible to the ground. If either of the three men went to inspect their horses it was with one or more ruffians at his heels. Young Mexico had been carried unconscious to his bark shelter in the middle of the timber, and morning found his men marking time, waiting for him to emerge and resume command.

The night's tragedy also had worked curious changes in Captain West. His boldness and roughness were no more. Blanche told Dane he had been deeply shocked on beholding the body of Jacks. It was his first intimation that he was not, and never had been, in command of the expedition. The discovery not only shattered his self-esteem but plunged him into a mental collapse. He took to his blankets and covered his head, his transition from the rôle of the burly, bullying skipper to that of frightened child being both pathetic and amazing.

With the first light Blanche stole out and met Dane behind the wagon and whispered:

"The men plot mischief. They talk in groups and become silent when they see me. They eye me in a horrible manner. I—I wish Mr. Carson could take us away. Anything but this terrible uncertainty. Even the Indians."

"He'll do what's best, dear," Dane comforted. "If not for him I never would have found you."

"If not for him it would be all over for uncle and me by this time," she shuddered. "But why can't we steal away? Mr. Carson has control over the Indians. He waves his hand and they come. He motions them to fall back and they obey."

"But he doesn't trust them any more than he trusts that cursed Mexico," growled Dane. "They'll do as he says up to a certain point. He's careful not to reach that point. He'd have killed Mexico last night if he was as thick-headed as I. But he has brains enough to know Mexico's death would have presented a new problem, rather a problem for every man-jack in the gang. So long as Mexico lives he'll do the thinking for the gang, and Carson has only one man to deal with. Was the cap'n surprized to see me last night?"

"He's like a child," she whimpered. "The sight of the dead man— I think his mind's unbalanced. He won't even talk about the treasure. He won't talk about anything. After you left us last night he told me he was sorry and wanted me to forgive him for bringing me on such a trip. And you'd have expected him to rave and demand Mr. Carson to hand back the paper."

Old man Williams sauntered up, trailed by an outlaw. Dane knew he was wanted and left the girl to meet the eccentric. Williams whirled about and with a fierce and thoroughly unministerial oath caught

his trailer by the hair and slipped the edge of a knife under his chin, and venomously whispered:

"You snake! It's foreordained I shall slit your weasand. Get near enough to breathe on my neck again and I'll have a look at your in'ards."

With this threat he pushed the man away and linked arms with Dane.

The outlaw tentatively fumbled at his belt, then rubbed his throat and took care to keep at a decent distance. Williams whispered to Dane:

"Kit's at the river. Mexico's not showing up makes him reckon we're coming to a show-down. The Kiowas are getting nervous. Some of their braves take turns riding back and forth along the ridge. Step here and look."

Dane advanced to the edge of the grove and beheld a brave in full war regalia riding his pony erratically and continually raising his right hand high above his head and swinging forward and downward to his side.

"He's signaling for Carson to go to them. Heathens want a palaver. They're fussed up and tired of waiting. Probably suspicious, too. Kit's either got to go to them and calm them down, or else we've got to hustle out of here. That scalp they took last night makes them think the gang is trying to break up and sneak away a man at a time."

"Has Mr. Carson told you his plans?"

"Only for you to stick near the girl and have her ready to help you hitch the mules to the wagon if you get the signal. Maybe she can have them at the pole ready to be hitched up without the gang noticing."

Dane nodded and turned back. Williams kept on until he had joined Carson on the river bank. Some twenty feet away stood an outlaw, detailed to keep tabs on the frontiersman. Williams' shadow joined this man and the two whispered and watched the frontiersman with malignant suspicion. Carson motioned for his friend to be seated.

"I want you to remove your spy and the one that's been following me," he instructed.

"The Lord giveth, the Lord taketh away," Williams muttered, reaching for his knife.

"Not just that," corrected Carson with a faint smile. "When I give the word hop and run into the timber. One if not both will follow you."

"Something about to happen?"

"Yes; look back at the grove while I tell you." Williams twisted his head and stared intently over his shoulder. "It's across the river," whispered Kit, pointing in the direction of Mexico's bark shelter. "Just before you came here I discovered a faint haze in the west. Indians or whites are riding down the opposite bank. The Kiowas have noticed it."

"The Jaguar's crossed up-stream and plans to make camp by fording about opposite this spot. That's sure why the Kiowas have been riding back and forth and signaling you to show up. They know what's about to happen. They want to rush the camp before the Jaguar gets here."

"Join Dane and help hitch up. Pull out the minute the Indians charge. I'll be at your heels. Go, and take my spy with you!"

Old Williams gave a startled glance toward the camp and with a well simulated snarl of alarm scuttled away. Carson took several steps after him, his countenance registering great concern. Williams' trailer hesitated none in slipping after him. The other hesitated, then became imbued with the spirit of the chase and followed his mate. Left alone, Carson hurriedly rearranged his mounds of dry fuel and with flint and steel managed to ignite one. The night's dew delayed him, but at last the tiny red tongues began curling in and out in a businesslike fashion.

A glance over his shoulder revealed the dust cloud much nearer, with the beams of the rising sun painting its heart a deep yellow. Working with great despatch he selected a burning brand from the first fire and lighted the second pile. Once he had nursed this to a show of strength he darted to the edge of the bank and procured some dry drift wood and soon had the two fires blazing fiercely. Now he could make out a dark mass under the dust up the opposite bank and caught the faint sound of fire-arms.

"The Jaguar's men, riding in a bunch, letting off guns to tell Mexico they're coming," he muttered as he proceeded to tear up handfuls of grass and throw them on the fire.

Thick dark smoke crawled from under the smothering mass and began ascending.

Before the column reached the tops of the trees he was gathering grass for the second fire. It was while running forward with an armful that a lithe figure leaped from the underbrush and lighted on his back, one arm flung 'round his throat the other reaching forward to plunge a knife into his breast.

Down dropped Carson to his knees, hurling his assailant over his head. With the ferocious nimbleness of a panther Young Mexico whirled face down and with the resilience of new rubber sprang to his feet and was back at Carson as the latter regained his footing. Carson caught the knife-hand and the two stood rigid, straining to gain an advantage.

Young Mexico, knowing time fought for him, essayed to call his men, but Carson hugged the open mouth against his breast, stifling the summons, and felt the teeth gnawing at the tough buckskin with the fury of a man-eater. For a few moments they remained thus, and in that brief interval Carson risked his balance by darting out his foot and kicking the green grass on to the fire.

INSTANTLY he was on his back with the outlaw on top of him. Young Mexico lifted his head and emitted one loud call for help. In the next moment he was underneath, his voice smothered, his knife-hand still helpless. But the cry was heard and hoarse voices called back and forth and several bandits came running to the rescue. Bunching his muscles, Carson suddenly released his hold and sprang erect. Almost as quickly Young Mexico flew to his feet. Carson snatched a glimpse at the two smokes and heard the war-cry of the Kiowas as he yanked at his pistol. The weapon stuck for a bit and, as the outlaws were about to break through the screen of bushes, their leader turned and dived frantically for cover, screaming:

"Kill! Kill! Kill!"

With a backward leap Carson gained a tree, then stooped low and noiselessly worked his way deeper into the growth. A backward glance showed him a band of horsemen plunging into the river; and he knew the Jaguar had broken through. Despite the need of haste he paused long enough at the foot of a tree to exhume the *taime* box, which he slung over his shoulder.

But now a new note was added to the chorus, the explosive howls of the charging Kiowas, and pursuit of Carson was suspended, the men rushing back to meet the onslaught.

The attack came at the west end of the grove and by this time the outlaws had passed word of the Jaguar's coming. The arrival of these reinforcements and the assault of the Indians became a race. Could the Kiowas stamp out the camp before the newcomers effected a landing in the timber they would score a double coup. By this time the eastern slope of the ridge was covered with fiercely shouting warriors, as Heart-Eater in the van waved his sacred arrow, and began singing his death-song.

Shouts of encouragement came from the men taking to the water. The outlaws behind their barricade answered them and began shooting down the Kiowas. But now the Indians were within arrow-shot, and a rain of shafts hissed into and beyond the barricade, and white men began to drop.

When Carson reached the wagon he found old Williams coolly helping the excited Dane and the frightened girl to quiet the mules and harness them up.

A shrill, nerve-racking screech split the air, followed by the trampling of many horses and the shouting of white men. Williams' fingers worked more rapidly; and to Carson he said:

"He's come! Tell his yell anywhere!"

They could hear the Jaguar's men crashing through the timber to meet the charge of the Indians, but at the edge of the cover the horsemen discovered the odds to be too great and dismounted to fight from behind the brush. The terrible scream of the Jaguar resounded again and again, but now the Kiowas were riding their ponies against the barricade and fighting with the temerity of demons. And above all the uproar and explosion of firearms rose the death-chant of Heart-Eater:

"O Sun, you remain forever, but we Kaitsenko must die.
O Earth, you remain forever, but we Kaitsenko must die."

"He's stuck his medicine-arrer into the ground and hitched himself to it! It's a fight to the finish!" yelped Williams, his gaze darting toward the smoke-filled battle-front.

"Can you drive?" Carson asked Blanche.

She nodded, fighting against hysteria.

"You're a brave little woman. Don't lose your nerve. Just hold them pointing down the trail and stick on. We'll be behind you. Up you go!"

He gently tossed her on to the seat and placed the reins and the long bull-whip in her hands and struck a wheel-mule on the flank with his hat. The vehicle creaked and groaned and emerged from the bush. The fighting at the upper end of the timber was now terrific, and the outlaws' defiance was punctuated by cries of alarm as the Kiowas rode down the line toward the wagon and sought to outflank their foes. Carson watched the Indians sharply, but none offered to break the pact by attacking him.

"O Sun, you remain forever, but we Kaitsenko must die."

This time the Heart-Eater's chant sounded much nearer.

"He's carrying the arrer to them! They're giving ground," exclaimed Williams.

Several outlaws now appeared, staggering back from the firing-line. They caught sight of the retreating wagon and with a howl of rage sent a shower of bullets after it.

"Get the mules along!" Carson shouted to Williams.

He had need to shout to make himself heard, for the grove was now an inferno of fearful cries. Williams, seconded by Dane, rode alongside the mules and helped the girl to raise them into a mad gallop. Down the trail swung the wagon, the long whip spurring the leaders. Behind rode Carson, watching the back trail.

Now two figures emerged from the smoke and dust and came after them like arrows. Carson reined in and threw up his gun, but discovered the pursuers were Kiowa braves, and lowered the weapon in disgust, saying:

"Redskins! Coming for their *taime*."

Racing after the wagon he unfastened the rawhide box from the back of his saddle and tossed it through the opening, where it lodged at the feet of Captain West.

"Faster! Faster!" he shouted as he came abreast of Blanche. "The whip!"

She reached it out to him, and pulling to one side he plied the long lash till it exploded like a rifle. All the cunning he had acquired as a boy, when employed as teamster, came back to him. The mules responded under his vigorous treatment and quickened their gait.

"Kiowas after the *taime*!" he yelped to Williams.

"They'll quit fighting the minute it's given back," warned Williams.

"They'll quit and come pounding after us the minute they hear we refuse to give it up," retorted Carson, straightening out the long lash. "They can have it when we get to the next ridge."

The two braves were rapidly overhauling the wagon, their ponies being fresh, and as they rode they continually threw up their hands and called on the white men to stop. The ridge ahead, Carson's objective point before surrendering the box, was at least two miles away. Carson dropped back to meet the messengers.

On they came, as though intending to ride him down, and pulled the ponies back on their haunches when within a few feet of him.

"Heart-Eater sends for the medicine!" cried one.

Carson noted the clamor in the camp still continued and answered:

"Does the Kiowa think the white men carry the *taime* on their saddles? Ride with me to the next ridge and you shall get it."

"Big-Knife comes from Heart-Eater, who has kept his word," protested the brave, his voice betraying suspicion.

"And so does Big-Little-Man keep his word," fiercely replied Carson. "You will find the 'woman' and the 'bear' *taime* on the ridge when we arrive. Come!"

Suspicious, but perceiving no alternative the warriors rode behind him after the bouncing and swaying wagon. As the distance between them and their fellows lengthened and the din in the cottonwoods dropped to a blurred confusion Big-Knife again remonstrated:

"The Kiowas are two. How do they know the white men will not kill them when they reach the ridge?"

"Are they squaws to be afraid? No; squaws would not be afraid. That is why their leggings show how many scalps their men have taken. They are brave. Big-Little-Man has said the *taime* will be given back when we reach the ridge. Big-Knife smells a trap where there is no trap. See!

I will ride in front of you. If the medicine is not brought to you when we reach the top of the ridge you can kill me."

And he rode a few yards ahead of them, his rifle across his saddle. Only once did he look back and then it was to study the back trail and not the Indians. No life was between him and the timber, and he called out for Williams to spare the mules for the ascent ahead.

The little cavalcade slowed down to a walk on reaching the slope, Dane and Williams riding beside Blanche, with Carson and the Kiowas trailing along some fifty feet behind. When the wagon topped the ridge Carson breathed more freely, and, turning, rose in the stirrups and gazed long and earnestly beneath his hand. The Indians refused to look back, fearing some trick. Big-Knife fingered his rifle nervously, his companion slyly fitted an arrow to his bow. Carson was not sure but he fancied he detected something in motion far in the rear.

DROPPING back into the saddle he called out to Williams:

"Pop, get the box in the end of the wagon and bring it to me."

"It's foreordained that when a white man gets the advantage over a red he oughter keep it," protested Williams.

"It's foreordained that we must keep faith," retorted Carson. "And hurry! I think we're chased, either by reds or whites."

Williams thrust his head in the end of the wagon and was so tardy in producing the box that Carson began to fear it had been jolted out unseen. When the old man held up the box the Indians grunted in amazement, and glared wrathfully at Carson.

"The medicine was not on the ridge," protested Big-Knife.

"I said we would find it on the ridge when we got there. And we have," Carson replied as Williams brought him the box.

Carson promptly handed over the sacred receptacle to Big-Knife, who, still suspecting a trick, paused to open it and make sure the precious images were inside. Then with a loud "*Wah!*" of joy he wheeled and darted down the slope with his companion at his heels.

As Carson and Williams spurred up the rise there came a shot from behind and a bullet clipped close to Carson's head and smashed into the wagon.

"The treacherous hound!" roared Williams.

Carson's face grew stern with indignation, and, whirling about, he threw up his rifle and sought a bead on Big-Knife. The warrior kept his pony dodging from side to side, while he waved his rifle derisively at the frontiersman. At last the long barrel caught the erratic movements of the pony, and the whip-like report was greeted with a cheer from Williams as Big-Knife dropped to the ground. The old man made ready to pot the second brave, who was now afoot to rescue the *taime;* but Carson restrained him, saying:

"Save your lead. Let him go."

"You wouldn't be so derned tenderhearted if you knew what that bullet did in the wagon," Williams rebuked in great disgust.

"At the angle it was fired it couldn't do more than rip through the top."

Williams was nonplussed, then declared:

"If it wasn't the Kiowas' lead then it was a bullet from the grove that done it. Some bullet killed Cap'n West, and I hate to be 'round when the girl finds it out. Poor young critter! She reckons the old man's asleep. I learned the truth when I went after the box."

Hardly had he finished than the girl cried out in shrill alarm and jumped from the seat to run to the back of the wagon.

After the first wild outburst Blanche bore up bravely under the shock of her uncle's death. It was obvious that when the wagon pulled out from the cottonwoods one of the bullets fired after it at random by the outlaws killed the captain. The fact he had been shot between the eyes indicated he had lifted himself to a sitting posture when the wagon was set in motion. Had he remained prostrate he would have escaped.

As soon as the wagon reached the bottom of the ridge Carson sent Blanche and Dane back to the crest to watch the back trail while he and Williams dug a grave and laid the blanket-wrapped form of the old sailor in it. As they finished their task and removed all traces of the burial Dane waved his hat and came down the ridge behind the girl.

"Something moving up the trail. Can't make out whether it's Indians or white men," he warned.

"Just a minute," rumbled old Williams,

removing his tattered hat and stepping to the grave.

Carson and Dane uncovered while the eccentric recited a prayer for the dead. And as he prayed his uncouthness dropped from him and his language became that of the Eastern settlements. Dane threw his arm 'round the weeping girl. At the conclusion of the prayer Carson said:

"We'll abandon the wagon. You shall ride my horse, *señorita.* I will ride one of the mules. Pop, help Mr. Dane pack supplies on the three mules. We won't abandon them until we have to. *Señorita,* where is the gold your uncle carried?"

She showed him a small strong-box clamped to the bottom of the wagon under the seat. Selecting a key from the personal effects of the captain, he opened this and found nearly three thousand dollars, which he placed in his saddle-bag.

Williams and Dane made quick work of loading the mules, and Carson mounted the remaining animal. He waited a moment for the girl to cast a last look at the lonely grave and then led the way down the trail.

"What next and where next?" asked Williams.

"Depends, Pop, whether we are followed by the Kiowa or the Jaguar's men. If by the outlaws we can outrun them as their horses are about pegged out from their long race down the river. If it's Kiowa they'll overtake us unless we throw them off the trail. For the present we'll push ahead to Mad Woman Crick."

"After the treasure?"

"The girl should have it if any of it is there. She's alone in the world. It'll be a nest-egg for her and Dane when they marry. She thought the captain was rich and carried a huge sum in gold. I reckon what we found in the box was all he had in the world, and that it was the thought of leaving her with so little that sent him out on this crazy business."

CHAPTER IX

HOW THEY FOUND THE THREE ROCKS

SAND-HILLS and ridges and gullies afforded the fugitives excellent cover, provided their pursuers were not Kiowa trackers. Carson believed the chase slackened in order that the wagon might be thoroughly overhauled. This might indicate Indians searching for loot, or outlaws hunting for the captain's gold. The fact remained that the wagon held up the chase, for after several hours of flight the frontiersman could discover no signs of the enemy. To throw them off the trail he had sacrificed speed for cover, by leaving the river trail to penetrate the broken country to the south. With the exception of a brief pause to rest their animals they traveled till nearly sundown, when Carson called a halt at the mouth of a narrow ravine.

"You'll find water in there," he said, pointing to wet rocks on side of the entrance.

"Meaning you're not going in?" inquired Williams.

"I'll be back soon. Take the mule and *señorita* will be plealsed to walk."

Blnche was glad to dismount and Carson whistled to his horse and sprang on his back and darted away toward a neighboring height.

Half-way to his objective he halted and sprang down to examine an Indian quiver of Kiowa workmanship lying beside a bush. As he examined it his set face relaxed; for it was made of buffalo hide, and this meant the one who lost it belonged to an expedition of old men, probably making for Mexico, leaving few if any warriors in the vicinity of Mad Woman Creek. Old men, because the Kiowas never used deer, antelope or buffalo skin for quivers if it could be avoided. Their choice always was panther, or Mexican leather. So he knew the young men of the village already had set out, either to raid Mexico settlements or to join Heart-Eater's band. They had departed with the best weapons and decorated quivers. Later the old men had been impelled to take the path with whatever odds and ends of equipment they could find or improvise.

"Well, thank the good Lord, that's one less worry," he told himself. "Probably they were called on to help round up the lost *taime.*"

Encouraged by this thought he pressed on and left his horse on a little plateau below the top of the ridge. Completing the ascent afoot he seated himself on the sunburned grass with the western country spread out before him for many miles. Sand-hills and ridges, dried-up watercourses and occasional clumps of timber or bush-growth, furnished the panorama. For nearly an hour he studied each sector

of the region and was about to depart when he was startled by the unexpected appearance of a horseman immediately below him. It was a white man and he wore a red handkerchief 'round his head. He was riding out of a narrow cañon and doubtless was the leader of the band.

Slipping and sliding down the slope Carson flung himself on his horse and fled at break-neck speed back to the ravine. Old Williams heard the rapid clatter of the flying hoofs and rose up from behind a boulder, rifle in hand and anxiously waited the word.

"Kill your fire if you've lighted one," cried Carson. "Red Jaguar's band is just beyond the big ridge."

"No fire yet," said Williams. "Did they spot you?"

"No. I don't think they have any idea we're here. Reckon they swung off the trail to dodge the Kiowas. Just happens this way."

"Nothing happens when things is fore-ordained," solemnly corrected Williams. "'He that killeth with the sword,' you know. And how can he die by the sword of the righteous unless he keeps near us?"

Despite the gravity of the situation Carson was forced to smile at the naïve egotism of this.

"Nevertheless, I think it's high time we were pulling out. They're apt to come over the ridge any minute," he insisted. "We'll find another spot within a few miles. Then the girl can sleep."

Hastening up the cañon where the shadows were already gathering, they found Dane earnestly talking to the girl, his arm 'round her waist. Carson was in great haste to be off, but his innate delicacy precluded his intruding on the lovers; and with a helpless glance at Williams he turned to retreat.

"Just a minute, Mr. Carson," called out Dane.

Giving them time to assume a more formal attitude Carson turned back to find them in the same confiding position.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Dane, but we must be moving on a bit. The outlaws are camped near here."

With a cry of alarm the girl sprang to her feet, begging—

"Let us start at once!"

Dane rose, his face frowning with determination.

"A moment can't matter much. Mr. Carson, you know I've followed Blanche because I love her. Her only relative is gone. We were to have been married at Monterey. Why can't we be married now—here? Not that I can protect her any more strongly because she is my wife, but perhaps she won't feel so lonely."

Carson was nonplussed, and humbly explained—

"I can do most anything in the way of roughing it, but I can't marry folks"

Williams pushed Carson aside, his brusk bearing in decided contrast to the frontiersman's show of diffidence.

"Does the young woman wish to marry you now?" he gravely inquired.

Blanche, beautiful in her sorrow, took her lover's hand and nodded.

"Of course she's willing, Pop," said Carson. "Both of them are very lucky. They're big medicine for each other. If the Kiowas were friendly we could find a camp and make the hitch redskin-fashion. I reckon it would be perfectly legal and binding. If there was any doubt a *padre* could fix it all right later."

Blanche gave a little gasp of dismay, and old Williams sternly retorted:

"Who's asking your opinion when it comes to the Gospel, Christopher? I reckon once a Methodist minister is always to be one. I never lost my license. I can marry folks so tight the devil himself can't separate 'em."

Carson was completely taken back.

"Why—er—that's so. I was forgetting you had preached, Pop. And it sure ought to be legal."

"Legal?" snorted the old man. "Just stand back and give me room to operate in. Blanche West, is it your wish to marry this boy now?"

She smiled wistfully at the "boy" and murmured an affirmative.

"Then I'll be scalped and dragged if you don't marry him even if the whole Kiowa Nation was rushing us, and all the Red Jaguars outside of —— was trying to get into this ravine. Take hold of hands."

Standing behind the young couple, his face grave and yet very happy from sympathy, Carson witnessed the unusual wedding, the old man officiating with much ease and with great solemnity. After the two had been pronounced man and wife the frontiersman urged that they leave

the ravine at once. But Williams was in his element, and motioning for Carson to keep silent said:

"I always say a few words of good advice to young people starting out on the matrimonial trail. Always did it back in Missouri and I don't see why I should quit the habit out here. Besides, this is the first wedding I've celebrated for many years—that is, between whites. Tried to marry two Utes once and the husband cut me with a knife thinking I was trying to queer his medicine. I just want to say this to you, and it's the secret of every happy marriage whether between reds or whites—be good to each other. If you remember that and practise it there ain't no one that can ever slip a thorn under the saddle of happiness; and you can look bad luck in the eye and tell it to go to ——. Now, we'll hear from Mr. Carson."

"Amen to all Pop says," added Carson. "And now we must move on."

With a kiss Dane tore himself away from his bride and worked zealously to muffle the feet of the animals with strips of blankets so they might not leave a trail on emerging from the ravine. Then through the gathering darkness Carson, afoot, led the way to the east in search of another hiding-place.

"This will do," he finally announced, reining in before a low overhanging cliff. "There ought to be some sort of cave in behind those rocks where we can build a fistful of fire. I know there's water near by the way the animals act."

The packs and saddles were removed and the mules led the way to a water-hole. Williams explored the recess under the lip of rock and made a fire for their coffee.

"How far are we from Mad Woman Crick, Pop?" asked Carson.

"Not more'n twenty miles, nor'east."

"Mrs. Dane, did your uncle tell Mexico's men where the treasure is buried?"

"No. Of course he had to tell them something so they could know which way to go. But when they pressed him he always said he would describe the spot after we had made ten miles beyond the creek and had reached a point where a huge cross was cut in a cliff. Of course there is no such cross. It was his way of keeping them in ignorance until they had brought us to the creek. He didn't fear or suspect them, poor dear! But he was afraid they might get excited and leave us and rush on ahead if they knew the exact spot. He honestly believed all our troubles would end when we reached the creek."

"That was clever of him," mused Carson. "But it will bring the gang to the crick and we must lay low till they've passed on in their search for the marked cliff. I'll scout for signs tomorrow."

BEFORE sunrise he was up and away, traveling west and swinging in toward the river and then back to the camp.

"Not even a smoke," he delighted his friends by reporting. "By keeping between the ridges we ought to make the crick without being seen."

"But Indians' villages? Isn't there one on the creek?" anxiously asked Dane.

"Not on the crick, or within several miles of it," spoke up Williams. "Something in their hist'ry about the place that seems to make it tabu to them. They won't hold a sun-dance there."

They started about midday, and although Carson repeatedly ascended hills and ridges in search of enemy signs he saw nothing of a suspicious nature. But when they struck the Canadian a mile above the mouth of the creek he found signs in plenty. Instead of alarming him, however, they consoled him. It was the trail of two score horsemen, and after studying it carefully, he pronounced them to be white men.

"Same men I saw from the ridge. Now they're ahead I feel easy," he said. "I'll ride on and if you hear me shoot, take to cover. The Kiowas must have taken a dozen scalps at the cottonwoods, for the Jaguar came with more than thirty men, maybe forty, and there were eighteen left under Young Mexico."

"But if theyre ahead let us turn back," pleaded Blanche. "Let the gold and silver go."

"There isn't any gold; nor would I let you run any risk for silver," assured Carson. "But after taking a dozen scalps and losing some warriors in doing it the Kiowas are sure to follow this gang. If we travel west we'll run into them—and I haven't any *taime* medicine to swap. The Jaguar's outfit is going it blind and will pass the crick and look for the cross on the cliff. While they're doing that we can slip in and look for the silver. If the outlaws come back before we're through, or if the Indians come

up, we can strike south and lose ourselves. One thing is sure—the whites and reds will clash before the treasure hunt is over."

"Maybe if Mrs. Dane understood how it was foreordained that I'm to preach the—" began Williams, but Carson stopped him by riding into his horse.

Leaving Williams to keep watch over the rear Carson raced ahead, reading the signs as he flew along. At the top of each elevation he would halt and scrutinize the country ahead with all his habitual caution, then speed like an arrow for the next vantage point. In a few minutes he had reached the mouth of the creek and had noted its assemblage of water-worn boulders.

The horsemen had halted just long enough to water their mounts, he decided. He turned and rode up the creek until he came to where the banks on both sides rose some thirty feet, the high-water mark showing that the stream ran between their precipitous sides like a mill-race at times. Only now it was low-water and there was room to ride a horse between the stream and the cliff.

"If there isn't a good hiding-place up in there then my name ain't Kit Carson," he exulted, wheeling and racing back to meet his friends.

When they arrived Williams was for an immediate search for the treasure, but Carson ruled they first locate their camp, and forthwith conducted them along the narrow way under the cliff. After a few minutes travel they found what he had confidently anticipated, a widening of the bank until it formed a large alcove in the rock. To satisfy fully his sense of prudence Carson pushed on alone until he found a way out from the rocks. On returning to camp he found Williams had unpacked the animals.

"We'll take the critters back to grass," advised the old man.

This was soon done, each animal being hobbled, and then Williams excitedly demanded—

"Now, let's have a peek at that map."

Carson handed it over to Blanche, saying—

"You folks look it over. I must keep watch both ways."

Climbing the cliff which formed the wall around their camp he examined the back trail until convinced no enemy moved between him and the sky-line. In the east it was the same. He turned his attention to his friends and saw them making for the mouth of the creek, Williams ahead, walking rapidly, the lovers behind, hand in hand.

As Carson came up Williams showed him the map and wrinkled his nose in disgust.

"I don't want the girl to hear," he commenced in a loud voice; "but her uncle was a fool. See how the map shows the crick flowing into the river? All right. Now here to the west, a hundred and twenty paces from the mouth, it shows three rocks in the river. Between 'em, the map says, is the silver. Thrown into the river and not buried on land."

"How does all this make out the old man was foolish?" queried Carson. "If it was dropped in the water, then all the more reason to believe no one has found it."

"Yah!" snarled Williams. "But here we be at a hundred and twenty paces; and will you kindly show me any three rocks, sticking out of the water close together? And it's low-water at that."

Carson swept his gaze up and down the river and had to admit that for twice the prescribed distance there were no such landmarks; not even one rock broke the surface. Nor anywhere within their ken could they behold three boulders jutting above the stream so as to form a triangle.

"And the girl don't get no treasure," moaned Williams.

Carson cast a stealthy glance at the pair. They had forgotten the search, had forgotten the world, and were standing with arms about each other, lost in their happiness. Carson chuckled dryly and replied:

"At least Dane certainly has found one. Girl's been pretty lucky, too."

But Williams was impervious to sentiment. He insisted:

"I've preached a funeral sermon, and have two more on my book. I've performed one wedding ceremony. And I've believed I was foreordained to round out my record by preaching a hallelujah sermon on account of the silver. When I feel that way and things don't turn out as they oughter I feel it's a blow at my religion."

In deep disgust he slumped down on a boulder and stared gloomily at the silent river.

Carson spread the map out on a boulder

and studied it carefully. At last, defeated, he folded the paper and handed it to Williams. The old man's fingers fumbled at it and allowed it to drop between them. Carson stooped to pick it up and remained in that awkward position, his eyes glistening as he observed the story of the boulders' battle with the current, as told by the worn water-line. Not daring to voice his wild hope he stood erect and stared wild-eyed at the rock Williams was perched on, then at his own; and next at another a few feet away.

"See something p'izen?" snapped Williams, at last conscious of his friend's intense gaze. "Well, I'm p'izen-proof. Tarantulas can walk all over me, but they can't hurt me. I've been so tired sometimes that I'd set down on 'em rather then to bother to brush 'em out the way."

To the old man's amazement Carson whipped out his knife and dropped on his knees and began digging up the ground.

"What in the name of the original sin?"

"Look!" whispered Carson, holding up a small object, crusted with dirt and circular in shape.

Dropping the exhibit, he resumed his digging and after a minute was turning up quantities of the round objects.

"Peter's pence!" choked Williams. "It's true and the derned map is a liar!"

He flopped down on his knees and helped in the excavating.

Carson took one of the objects and scraped it with his knife.

"Mexican dollar!" he cried. "Hi, Dane! Mrs. Dane! Wake up and come here."

They came on the run and were astounded to find he had uncovered a large pocket of the coins.

"But it can't be money!" she faintly protested.

"*Adalhangya*!" grunted Carson.

"'Hair-metal!'" panted old Williams.

"This is where Black-Wolf was killed," added Carson. "Lame-Old-Man was in command. Kiowas always speak of it as 'The-Winter-they-found-the-hair-metal,' or money."

"But it isn't the money our map tells about," cried Blanche. "Our money was buried between three rocks out in the river."

"It's your money, Mrs. Dane. The same money the map meant. Only, old Pop here was slow-witted. He didn't remember that a river sometimes shifts its course. These three rocks were under water when the money was buried, but the channel has shifted north since then, leaving them on the bank. You can read the whole story if you examined the under side of the boulders."

Blanche and Dane went down to examine the water-mark, but Carson suddenly lost all interest in the treasure and sprang to his feet and gazed swiftly to the west, then to the east. Old Williams, still on his knees, now caught the alarm; only he flung himself on the ground.

"Down here, Kit," he said.

Carson dropped flat with his ear to the ground. He felt rather than heard it—a mighty vibration, the sullen thunder of an approaching host. Leaping erect he sharply ordered:

"Dane, take your wife back to the camp. Gather in the animals as you go along. Pop, cover this stuff up right. Then make after Dane and see he has corraled all the animals. I'll find you up the crick."

Leaving them to their tasks he ran nimbly up the rocks where he had first spied out the land. From this elevation he vaguely made out a low-hanging cloud between him and the setting sun, and he grew conscious of a strange humming in the air, little air-waves that beat against his whole body. Descending the rock-pile he returned to where Williams was completing his task and nodded in approval.

"We were foolish to uncover it until we were ready to sack it away," he remarked. "Now for the crick."

"Why don't you talk? Leave me to paw dirt and come back and say nothing," roared Williams in great exasperation as he shuffled along behind his friend.

"I forgot. A mighty big herd of buffaloes," explained Carson. "If they pass the crick they'll completely smother any trail we made."

"And what's behind the buf'lers?" asked Williams.

"Kiowas."

"Well, they can't rub out them three boulders, but I wish they'd held back a couple of hours. I'm hankering to know how much the little girl is worth."

"You'd wait a lifetime to find out the full value, and then not fully know," gravely replied Carson. "You can place her worth at several billion to start with."

"——fino a man, Kit, what can say such pretty stuff as you can when you don't know you're saying it," admired Williams.

"Hurry on! It's growing dark. It's a big herd to make such a dust."

CHAPTER X

HOW DANE LOST HIS TREASURE

AT THE mouth of the narrow path Carson and Williams crouched in the darkness and listened to the thunderous roar of the passing buffalo, and felt the ground quiver and shake as the mighty mass tore up the trail and crossed the creek; the mad bellowing, the thick dust and the continuous vibrations blotting out all details and leaving only a stunned consciousness of the stupendous. Back in the camp Dane comforted Blanche and waited for the frontiersmen to return. Williams went to them and reported that the bulk of the herd had passed and that Carson had gone forth afoot to scout for Kiowa signs.

It was past midnight when Carson returned.

"Redskins caused the stampede, just as we had reckoned," he informed. "A big war-party crossed the creek, making east. I trailed along behind until sure they wouldn't turn back here. I think we can dig up the silver in the morning without being disturbed."

With the first streaks of dawn the little party was ready for the day's adventures, Carson stealing ahead to make doubly sure no enemies lurked in that vicinity.

From the banks of the Canadian to the edge of the broken land the buffalo had torn up the ground and left only a brown carpet of raw earth. Dane counted twenty huge carcasses scattered among the boulders at the mouth of the creek, while in the stream itself was a bridge of the dead creatures, the weak having been trampled underfoot. Williams picked up several Kiowa war-arrows, thus completely identifying those who rode behind the stampede.

Carson ordered Blanche and her husband to excavate the coins while he and Williams prepared bags and brought up the mules, which were to serve as a pack-train. Among the supplies taken from the abandoned wagon the frontiersmen procured heavy blankets and rapidly sewed them together and stuffed them with grass. As soon as one was finished it was placed on a mule's back, extending well down on both sides, and cinched as tightly as possible. In fact, so tightly was the broad strap drawn that the grunting and complaining of the animals attracted Blanche's sympathetic attention, and she timidly expressed a fear that the two tugging men would cut the poor brutes in two.

"It's for their own good, Mrs. Dane," assured Carson. "Unless the *aparejo* is so tightly secured as to prevent slipping the beast wouldn't travel a mile without being chafed to the raw. Besides, these mules are cunning rascals. They're trying to make you believe they were never in an *atajo*. But on the back of each is an old scar, showing they've carried the saddle before. Now we'll make ready for the *carga*—which means 'load,' Mrs. Dane."

Blanche returned to help her husband remove the débris left between the rocks by the herd, while Carson and Williams turned to skinning one of the dead bulls.

Dane at last succeeded in clearing the ground between the rocks and was soon on top of the silver. As he dug deeper he discovered the silver had been enclosed originally in large buckskin bags, which had broken apart leaving the coins loose. As fast as her husband unearthed the treasure Blanche removed it from the rocks and piled the coins in lots of five hundred each. When Dane rose and eased his aching back and announced, "That's all I can find in that pocket," she rapidly finished her count, and informed—

"Nineteen thousand and two hundred dollars is what I make it."

"There must be more," said Dane.

"Remember that Mr. Carson said the Kiowas found some."

"But your uncle believed there was a hundred thousand."

"He also believed it was in bullion, both gold and silver. Poor uncle!"

Dane remained optimistic and thoroughly excavated the entire space inside the triangle of rocks. Finding no more coins he commenced digging a trench around them. At last he ceased his efforts and admitted—

"If there are any more they're not near these boulders."

Carson came up to learn their success, and remarked:

"Not as much as I had hoped. Yet it's a decent sum. More than I ever had in my life."

"It'll give us five thousand apiece," observed Dane.

"It goes in thirds, dear. You and I are one," she corrected.

"It goes in halves, Mrs. Dane and her husband sharing equally," said Carson with a flash of his teeth.

"I absolutely refuse!" indignantly protested Blanche.

Dane growled—

"Mr. Carson, what you propose is ridiculous and——"

"And so we won't hear any more about it," interrupted the frontiersman. "Border men don't take pay for jobs like these. All they ask for is good-will and friendship. Why, sir, if not for this trip Pop and I would never have known Mrs. Dane. Border men can spend money, or lose it, or throw it away; but I'm sure I shall carry Mrs. Dane's good thoughts of me down to my grave."

" 'Without money and without price,' " bawled out old Williams as he struggled with a refractory mule. "Besides, we ain't got this stuff safe home yet. Only a measly twenty thousand for the little girl. What liars these treasure maps be! S'pose we turn *arrieros*, Kit, and pack the stuff."

Carson ran back and brought up a bag, hastily made from the green pelt of the buffalo, and into this they dumped about three hundred pounds of the coins. Around the middle of the bag they tied a strip of rawhide so as to separate the burden into two equal parts. Then standing on the near side of the mules Carson announced:

"I'll be the *cargador*. Throw on the *carga*, assistant."

Williams, aided by Dane, carefully lifted the silver on to the improvised saddle. Carson blindfolded the mule so as to still its uneasiness and made sure the ends of the packs balanced. Williams threw a section of rope over the load and under the belly and together with Carson skillfully laced it back and forth and made it fast to the rawhide thong 'round the middle of the bag.

With one knee against the mule Carson plucked the eye-bandage away, and cried out—

"*Adios!*"

"*Vaya!*" bawled Williams in the most approved muleteer style and voice.

"*Anda!*" cried Carson, giving the mule a slap; and that the animal was old to the game was shown by his trotting aside to feed until his mates were similarly equipped.

"Less'n five minutes! We ain't lost our knack," boasted Williams.

Meeting Blanche's admiring gaze Carson diffidently explained:

"It's simple, Mrs. Dane. Before I became a hunter or a trapper I learned how to pack a saddle."

"How fast will they travel under such a load?" anxiously inquired Dane.

Carson became grave, for he understood the serious thought behind the query.

"Twelve or fifteen miles."

"Which means without stopping," explained Williams. "If we stop the derned critters will lie down, and being top-heavy it'll be mighty hard work to boost them on to their feet again, letting alone the chances of their spoiling themselves by straining."

"That's right. We mustn't stop," added Carson.

"But they're tied up so tight!" protested Blanche.

"That load looks tight, ma'am. Well, it is tight. Tight as we could make it. Still, after the critter's struck the trail it'll work loose and we'll have to keep tightening it up. If we didn't every *aparejo* would slip and slide and get down under the belly. I tell you, ma'am, being a *arriero* ain't no fun."

"They're mighty smart, mules are," Carson contributed. "After three or four days each will know his own load and saddle and will go to it when it's time to pack up."

"It only needs that one mule learns his pack," grinned Williams. "When he does he'll kick the stuffing out any mule what comes near. Then that mule goes and learns his pack and kicks a friend. When the third one learns, the fourth don't have to learn. Just takes what's left."

Blanche surveyed the two men thoughtfully, and like Dane wondered why they had endured hardships and risked their lives for strangers. When she spoke it was to decisively declare—

"It's no time to talk about it now, but when we get back to civilization you men will take your share of the silver."

"I'm willing to do that now," Carson delighted her by agreeing. "Pop and I

hired out as *arrieros*. What's the wages of a bang-up muleteer, Pop?"

"Five dollars a month, with rations," the old man promptly replied.

"I knew it was something like that."

Then turning to Blanche with a warm smile he told her:

"You shall pay us five dollars a month. We're getting our rations from the supplies your uncle brought. And I'm glad that is settled."

She tossed her head indignantly. Williams guffawed loudly. Carson earnestly insisted:

"Five dollars a month for a muleteer is full pay. It may be a bit below that now. Or it may be a little above that in the Apache country. But rations usually consist only of beans, sometimes corn. The muleteer must shoot any meat he eats."

He was telling her truth although she thought it a joke. Suddenly her little smile vanished and she glanced up at the blue heavens in alarm.

"Did you hear the thunder? It's silly of me but a thunder-storm always frightens me."

"Every one quiet," ordered Carson. "It can't be thunder you heard."

"Buffalo again!" suggested Dane, beginning to fill another bag with the coins.

"No; I just heard it. When buffalo stampede you seem to feel it first. What do you make of it, Pop?"

It came faintly to them all. Williams, who was facing toward the southeast, decided—

"It's a gun-fire in volleys."

Carson waited until he caught it again, and his face grew very serious as he viewed the heap of silver and realized the work remaining to be done.

"No time for talk," he warned. "All get to work. We can't bury and dig this stuff up again. Pop, come with me and help make two more bags. Dane, take a blanket and pack the silver down to the path leading to the camp. We'll cache it there if we don't have time to get it on the mules. We must find a new hiding-place. If Indian or outlaw comes back this way and sees the signs we're leaving he'd guess the truth mighty quick."

"But I can fill these holes up and cover them over with dry dirt," Dane said.

"To be sure. But you can't put the hide back on the buffalo Pop and I skinned," reminded Carson. "The hide alone tells the whole story."

For two hours all worked desperately, and as they labored Carson kept his ear open for danger-signals and observed that the firing was intermittent and approaching nearer.

"They're fighting, then turning and running, Pop. The Kiowas have the Jaguar's men on the jump," he muttered as they finished making the last bag.

"That's how, Kit. They find cover and make a stand, then run for another patch of cover."

Carson cleaned his knife and washed his hands in the creek and said:

"I can't stand it any longer. Dane can help you pack up. I'm going to scout towards the shooting. You folks strike for our last camping-place. I'll overtake you on the way, or find you there."

"We're one horse shy," Williams reminded. "All the mules is in the *atajo*."

"You've got twenty miles to make. You must push through without stopping. The mules must do it. You and Dane can take turns riding."

With that he whistled up his own steed and with a wave of his rifle to the Danes forded the creek.

FROM the edge of the cliff Carson could make out a band of horsemen coming toward the ravine. As they rode plumes of smoke rose above them, shortly followed by dull reports, but it was some minutes before he saw the Kiowas. The fugitives were making for the ravine in the hope of standing off the enemy until their mounts were rested, or until night came. The ravine extended half a mile among the low cliffs and was a *cul-de-sac*. In various places, as Carson knew, it was easy for an active man to climb the fifty-foot walls, but quite impossible for a horse. And without horses a man was lost in the Kiowa country. Scattered before the mouth of the ravine were many large boulders, with the plain beyond gently undulating.

As the horsemen drew nearer Carson could pick out the red handkerchiefs worn under their hats, while one figure wore a red turban and was, he knew, the dreaded Red Jaguar. Close beside the Jaguar galloped Young Mexico. The horses were sadly fagged and needed much spurring to make the distance. The Indians' mounts

were scarcely in better trim. As the outlaws reached the rock-strewn area Carson counted twenty. The medicine of the Kiowas had been very strong, and the frontiersman did not wonder that the red men should whoop so exultingly as they spread out to bottle up the white men.

The moment the riders entered among the rocks all but four dismounted and took cover, while the four herded the horses up the ravine out of range. Ensconced behind the rocks, the party opened a heavy fire on the Indians at long range and dropped several ponies and two warriors. The Indians did not return the fire, as the majority of them were armed with bows and arrows, but their fashion of sweeping on in a long semicircle was very grim and bespoke an earnest intention of winding the running fight up once for all.

As he stared down on the redoubtable Jaguar, Carson tentatively fumbled his rifle, then withheld his hand. He had no compunctions about killing the scourge on sight, but if he revealed his presence some of the Kiowas would attack him.

Now in a magnificent finish the Indians came tearing up the rocks, riding low on their ponies and presenting scarcely any of their person as a target. The ends of the line overlapped the entrance to the ravine, and the warriors threw themselves from their ponies and began an enfilading fire that quickly drove the outposts of the outlaws back.

Tossing their lances and brandishing their bows and arrows and few rifles, the center of the line dismounted and scurried to the first rocks. Several young bucks gathered up the ponies and rode them back out of range and returned to the fighting on the run. In all his experience Carson had never witnessed greater bravery among Indians, nor had he seen a battle where the red men seemed to be so sure of success.

"Just because they've got their *taime* back," he mused. "They believe they can lick all creation and that helps a heap when you start trouble."

He saw Heart-Eater hold up the ceremonial arrow in the center of the line, and then leave cover and run ahead till well in advance of his braves and drop behind a small rock. There he planted the arrow and anchored himself to it and called on his warriors to remember their *taime* was with them. The outlaws fought sullenly, wasting no breath in hurling back the cries of defiance. Forced to ignore the center of the fighting line for the time being, the score of men gave their attention to discouraging the wings from creeping in until it would be possible for sharpshooters to ascend the cliff.

The representative of the Tonkonko, taking advantage of this lull before him, recklessly left cover and ran to a position a bit ahead of the Heart-Eater. But instead of remaining satisfied with having surpassed his chief he needs must leap upon a rock and derisively shake his sacred lance at the hidden foe. Almost instantly he fell, riddled with bullets. As he went over backward another member of the Tonkonko glided in and snatched up the sacred *pabon* and thrust it in the ground.

Young Mexico boldly exposed himself and aiming as deliberately as if at target practice sent a bullet through the brave's head. These easy victories incited a bandit to spring out to capture the medicine-lance, good strategy for weakening the morale of the attackers, but now destined to fail. He all but had the lance when a brave painted black from head to feet came vaulting over a boulder, snatched up the lance and drove it into the bandit's breast and would have scalped him if not for a shower of lead driving him back. Unlike his predecessor he was content to take up a position behind Heart-Eater. This retreat savored none of weakness, for having killed an enemy he was justified in withdrawing to the background if he chose.

Heart-Eater, whose vow compelled him to remain where he was regardless of how the tide of battle turned against him, unless his warriors should urge him to retire, rested content with keeping concealed and directing the fighting. At a glance he had appreciated the military values of getting men up among the rocks above the besieged. His staccato bark could be heard between the volleys, and Carson, thoroughly versed in the Kiowa dialect, heard him command his men to climb up the cliff.

The Jaguar was first to detect the move and with a shout of warning made a rush for the cliff on his right. Carson was thrilled to watch the slim figure ascending what appeared to be a smooth and perpendicular wall. His red turban and the scarlet insert in his flaring breeches made

him a conspicuous figure, but although assailed with showers of arrows he bore a charmed life and calmly continued climbing until he was on a level with the frontiersman.

There was a sporting quality about the feat that aroused Carson's admiration. He knew he was in danger of being seen by the bandit leader, and to safeguard his own retreat drew a bead on the slim figure, but determined to withhold his fire unless discovered.

The opposite wall was considerably higher than the top of the cliff where the frontiersman was lying, but the Jaguar had eyes only for the crawling figures lower down and across the ravine. Standing on a narrow shelf of rock he fired and loaded rapidly and tumbled three braves back among their mates and stopped the maneuver. But Heart-Eater gave frantic orders and several warriors began mounting up on the Jaguar's side. The outlaw leader did not sense this new peril till Young Mexico screamed at him and pointed ahead of him. Nodding to show he understood he gingerly edged his way along till he came to a breast-high barrier of rock.

As he reached it a savage rose on the opposite side and lunged at him with a lance. The Jaguar pistoled him and pushed him off the rock and sent him hurtling down to the floor of the ravine. Almost before he straightened from his exertions another warrior appeared and leaped over the rock and clinched with him. The firing from the outlaws and from the Indians ceased as all watched the strange duel.

The Jaguar's red sash, red-slashed breeches and red turban set him off in vivid contrast to the dark cliff and swarthy Indian. The two maneuvered for an advantage while confined to the narrow shelf. Their feet, to the watchers below, seemed to be stuck to the ledge. Holding each other tightly they appeared to fear any violent efforts, so delicate was the problem of balance.

Cautiously they swayed back and forth, giving an impression of make-belief. Then the warrior gave a quick twist and squirm and both were poised on the edge of the shelf, the Indian seeming to have the advantage. In reality the brave must sacrifice himself in order to push the Jaguar off the ledge. As though by mutual consent they moved back, stepping mincingly. Then, discarding all prudence, the two forms whirled and twisted madly, the flashes of red marking the Jaguar's gyrations, the two swerving to the edge of the rock and in the nick of time swaying back against the wall of the cliff.

A sudden surcease in the frantic struggle, a pause of a second, and the Jaguar with one arm free drew back his heavy knife and struck, and the next moment stood alone. Throwing back his head he sounded the cry of the jaguar. The outlaws shouted in hoarse enthusiasm and were inclined to press the fighting. Their chief slipped over the edge of the platform and descended, his long lithe form twisting from knob to crevice with the ease of a snake.

Heart-Eater feared the white man's victory would dampen the ardor of his followers. The contest might be taken as being symbolic of the outcome of the battle. To offset this danger he began a gutteral chant. He reminded his braves how the Kiowas came from the Hollow Cottonwood Tree in the beginning. How their grandfather, the Sun, had provided a tribal medicine that made them unconquerable. They were not to be beaten by cowardly scavengers who hid up in lonely mountains. Already they had taken many scalps.

He called upon the men of the Kata, the largest and most important division of the Camp Circle, and holding first place therein. He reminded them that Dohasan, their great chief, was of the Kata, Dohasan, whose family inherited the duty of providing buffalo-meat for the annual sun-dance.

"Dohasan even now is on his way home from the Crows, bringing meat for the *k'ado*. Shall he find cowards awaiting him, unfit to eat of the meat?"

Next he called on the Kogui, or Elks, who sat beside the Kata in the Circle, and whose office it was to lead in war ceremonies, and demanded—

"Will the Elks hold back now, when a battle is won?"

He appealed to the small but powerful Gaigwu division, who have charge of the sun-dance and from whom come the keepers of the *taime*, and urged them to be faithful. He shouted for the men of the Kinep, "Big Shields," powerful in magic, to weave evil spells about the white men. And for his peroration he rapidly called the role of the Yapahe, beginning with the

Adaltoyui, "Young Wild Sheep," and concluding with the Kaitsenko. As each name was shouted members of that order brandished lance, or shield, and hoarsely vowed their hearts were stout.

Then with a display of recklessness that was squarely at right angles with his habitual caution the chief leaped from behind his boulder and with a rush covered twenty feet of open ground and pulled an outlaw from behind a rock and thrust the medicine-arrow through his throat before the dead man's mates had fully recovered from their astonishment. The Jaguar was the first to resent this audacious assault, and cursing in Spanish he ran forward, discharging his pistol blindly.

WITH a yell of defiance Heart-Eater retreated, holding a gory trophy aloft on the point of his arrow. Execrations and hurried shots followed him. When he gained cover Carson noted he moved with a limp and correctly surmised that he had been wounded in the leg. He had accomplished his purpose; he had reanimated the fighting heart of his people. Elevating the scalp above the top of the rock he waved it back and forth and chanted his military vow:

"O Sun, you remain forever, but we Kaitsenko must die.
"O Earth, you remain forever, but we Kaitsenko must die."

Red Jaguar cursed his men for cowards and raged and raved like a madman. Carson drew a deep breath and told himself:

"That chief has lots of guts! He's won the trick. He'll bag the whole outfit!"

Young Mexico, who had been sniping at the right wing of the Kiowas, scuttled across to the Jaguar and succeeded in quieting him. The Jaguar laid aside his impotent fury and listened keenly to his young henchman. Soon the two were talking earnestly. The Indians, made bold of heart by their chief's harangue and signal victory, began pressing the attack. The outlaws commenced firing hurriedly, and, as Carson believed, nervously—a bad sign.

Under cover of the smoke and confusion Young Mexico raced up the ravine. In a few minutes he returned leading two horses. One of these wore a saddle stained blood-red. Fifty yards back of the desperately fighting whites he led the horses to the wall and vanished.

Carson rubbed his eyes incredulously. In a few moments the young bandit reappeared, seeming to have stepped out of the solid wall. Carson smiled sheepishly. Mexico had noticed a projection in the wall of the cliff. Behind this he had corralled the two horses, his and Red Jaguar's. His intention was easy to surmise.

Now the chanting of the red men was growing stronger and stronger and approaching a grand climax. It heralded the Kiowas' purpose of making one rush to blot out their foes. And Carson paid homage to their courage; for he knew it was seldom that the red man would maintain a charge in the face of destructive fire. But their faith in the *taime* had filled their hearts with reckless courage.

Young Mexico waved his hand to the Jaguar. The latter placed a whistle to his lips and sounded a piercing signal. The Indians lowered the volume of their song, expecting an assault, but the outlaws were falling back. Again the whistle rang out, and the men turned and fled up the ravine, making for their mounts. With howls of joy the Kiowas rose and streamed into the mouth of the ravine, firing as they came. The mass of fugitives turning a bend in the ravine did not, however, include either the Jaguar or his lieutenant.

"They can't get out! That devil has sold them to save his own pelt!" muttered Carson.

Loudly gloating over the trap into which their foes had fled, the warriors raced on, their gaze focused on the fleeing whites. Only a few stragglers were abreast of the pocket in the cliff when like meteors Red Jaguar and Young Mexico darted from behind the spur of rock, firing pistols and rifles as they raced for the open plain. The bulk of the Kiowas were blind to everything except the victims now hopelessly penned up at the end of the ravine.

"The low-down hounds!" gritted Carson, throwing his gun over the lip of the cliff and taking a plunging shot at the Jaguar.

The red turban was jerked nearly off the Jaguar's head but he showed no sign of being hurt.

The frontiersman hastily reloaded and crept down to the plain. He could catch the cries of the doomed and victorious as

the Kiowas completed the slaughter. Two specks in the west were the fleeing survivors. Carson's gaze grew troubled as he saw their course was taking them to the mouth of Mad Woman Creek. Running to his concealed horse he spurred after them. For there was something in his heart that made him afraid if the two were not stopped before reaching the creek.

Spurred on by fear of a horrible death, the outlaws spared their horses none and soon disappeared in some fold of the plain. Instead of seeking their trail Carson pushed straight ahead for the creek, well content if he could overtake his friends.

The sun was two hours past the meridian when he leaped from the saddle and permitted his horse to drink. A cursory investigation told him his friends were on their way to the rendezvous, and after allowing his animal a brief rest he hunted and found where their trail left the spoor of the stampeded buffaloes to strike to the southwest. He followed for a mile and tightened his lips grimly on coming to the signs of two horses cutting into the trail. The horsemen had come at a frantic gallop, but had quickly slowed their pace on observing the trail left by Williams and the Danes and the four mules. Another mile and he saw the horsemen had turned off to the east. Right well he understood this maneuver. They were making a detour to lay an ambush for the pack-train.

THE single rifle-shot had seemed near and Carson drove home the spurs. With a low cry of dismay he came to a plunging halt beside old Williams, who was holding Dane's head on his knee.

"Dead?"

"Head creased. They've got the girl. Just ahead."

A kick of the heel, and horse and rider were skimming through the gloom. He covered a mile and slowed down at the sight of a dead horse, wearing a blood-red Mexican saddle. As Carson resumed the chase he quickly reconstructed much of the tragedy. Dane and the girl must have been riding ahead, lost to everything but the miracle of their love. Williams was behind, some distance, looking after the mules. The Jaguar and Young Mexico in ambush took it for granted that both Carson and Williams were near. With a single shot they knocked Dane from his horse, and dashed from cover and had scooped the girl from her saddle. Hearing the shot, Williams had raced ahead in time to see the outlaws making off, and had fired and mortally wounded the Jaguar's steed.

As Williams was a dead shot and must have fired at the horse from choice it was plain the Jaguar had been carrying the girl across his saddle and the old man had not dared to shoot at him for fear of wounding her.

With an inward cry of triumph Carson whispered to his faithful mount:

"We stand a good chance of corralling them, old boy. Two men and a woman and only one horse! The Jaguar had to pass the girl over to Young Mexico and go it afoot. Young Mexico would like to ride off with her, but won't dare as the Jaguar would shoot to kill. Both of them will figure to get that horse. The Jaguar won't hanker to go far afoot. They'll all go into camp—and only one man and the girl will come out—if I don't get there. They'll go into camp—near here. But where?"

He slowed down to a walk and unrolled his mental map of the country. He visualized a wide amphitheater, where Nature had gone on a debauch and broken things up. He knew he was near it as the way grew rocky and sloped downward. Somewhere near was the beginning of the amphitheater, a drop of a hundred feet at easy grade, a huge basin littered with grotesque rock-piles and a most excellent place for hide-and-seek when searchers pressed close.

This basin, or bowl, was more than a mile in diameter and was tabu to the Kiowas except during the Great-moon-of-deer-horns-dropping-off, when they went there to make arrow-heads. On such visits he knew the Indians remained for several weeks among the naked rocks and suffered no inconvenience. This evidenced a plentiful supply of water, although no white man, so far as the frontiersman knew, ever succeeded in finding a drop. It furnished an ideal jumping-off place for furious flight, as the fugitive could start from any point of the circle and remain unseen until clear of the chaos.

"Unless they have grub along and know where to find water they don't reckon to stay more than the night," Carson mused, dismounting. "And they've got only one horse. Each reckons that the other shall stick behind."

CHAPTER XI

HOW THE OUTLAWS LOST AT KNIFE-PLAY

NEAR the western edge of the amphitheater was a well-like depression, roughly circular in outline and some fifty feet in diameter. The walls enclosing it were from fifteen to twenty feet in height, and were smooth and perpendicular except toward the north, where the bank was broken and formed a narrow passageway. Near the center of this hollow burned a small fire. Red Jaguar crouched before the blaze, his thin, dark face haggard from hardships and passionate with suppressed fury. He was heating a ration of corn and beans in a small pan. Lying on a blanket against the wall was Blanche Dane, a lariat wound tightly 'round her slim form and a red handkerchief holding a gag in place. Young Mexico was rubbing down a horse, his own.

As Mexico worked over the animal he displayed for once in his life a touch of gentleness. The Jaguar watched with wide-open eyes, for the fire was insufficient to light the place, and shadows fought for supremacy along the walls. The eyes of the prisoner shone like stars as they followed the movements of the two men. As Mexico shifted the position of the horse the Jaguar shifted his position so as to continue facing him. When the fire died down and permitted Mexico to blend with the shadows the Jaguar tossed on a few twigs and used his left hand in manipulating the dish of corn and beans.

At last Mexico finished caring for his mount and walked across to the fire, his gaze never leaving the dark orbs of his chief.

"A bad business, *compadre*," he remarked, sitting on his heels, his hands held loosely before him.

"Damnable!" hissed the Jaguar. "Never in all the five years I've worked from Sangre de Cristo has it happened like this. Why in the name of your patron fiend did you decoy me into such a trap?"

"That's a mighty bad word to use between friends," muttered Young Mexico, his hands twitching.

"A thousand pardons," purred the Jaguar, hitching back a bit. "And after all, you were on my business."

"If you had let me alone to play the game as I'd planned we wouldn't be holed up here with Carson tracking us," complained Mexico.

"May he roast in ——! For five years I've known that some time I must meet that man—and have been ready. Bah! He is no bigger than a boy!"

"But now you're not ready," Mexico slowly reminded. "And size don't count. He only has to point a finger to make a man as big as a Comanche, or Pecos, crawl."

"I'm neither of those dead men," returned the Jaguar, setting the pan aside and softly rubbing his hands on his knees. "I can crawl, but it's always forward, to spring, to strike. I'm not named Red Jaguar for nothing."

"I still reckon we wouldn't 'a' been in this pickle if I'd had free rein," growled Mexico. "I'd have done for the old man and the girl and gone on and found the treasure. But you had to send word for me to hold the girl and wait for you to join me. That gave the Kiowas and that cursed Carson a chance to ring in a cold deck."

"My friend, I do not like your tone, nor your words. I know you do not mean it, but it sounds as though you were finding fault with me," gently remonstrated the Jaguar, rocking on his heels, his eyes growing dull and baleful like a snake's. "And how did Carson get on your trail? What made him follow you? My spy at Bent's sends word regularly that he is busy shooting meat for the fort. None of my men had a chance to drop anything. I almost fear, *señor*, some of your men were careless in Santa Fé—and talked."

"Not so," Mexico angrily denied. "That hound called Dane followed the girl to Santa Fé from Monterey. He asked every one about them. Of course some one knew of our setting out. We couldn't muzzle the old man, could we? The rest is simple; Dane ran into Carson and old man Williams, who guided him after us."

"And knew your plans to do the Wests before they caught up with you," interpolated the Jaguar. "But let that pass. It can't be mended. However, I do not like to be found fault with."

Again he tipped back on his heels and Mexico watched him narrowly.

"Reckon it's natural to kick when everything is lost," was the sullent retort.

"But we have the girl."

"We have no treasure. All our men wiped out."

"Gold and silver are easy to get. Beauties like that come seldom into one's hands." He motioned toward Blanche without removing his gaze from his companion's face. "As for the men, we are well rid of them. They've been with me too long. I've heard tales of discontent, of murmuring, of childish beliefs they could turn on me and defy me."

He paused to allow his thin lips to draw back and reveal his long white teeth in a feline snarl.

Young Mexico felt the blood rising to his face. He knew some of his men had endeavored to curry favor with the chief by repeating what had happened in the cottonwoods after Jacks received his death-blow.

"Comanche was a trouble-maker. If the Kiowas hadn't snagged him you'd 'a' been forced to put him away."

The Jaguar half-closed his eyes and laughed silently. At last he agreed:

"He was a treacherous hound—that Comanche. Ah! The *señorita* moves. She is incommoded. See to her, my gallant Mexico. We have suffered so much in her behalf it would be a crime if she should suffer, too."

Although his back was to the prisoner Young Mexico knew she had not moved, for the simple reason she could not. It was an excuse to get him from the fire and make him turn his back. He darted a glance at the slim yellow hands of the Jaguar, then at the ivory handle of the pistol at his hip. He knew that before he could draw a weapon the Jaguar would drop on his side, his right hand pulling and firing the pistol. With a shrug of his shoulders he rose, saying—

"Women are a nuisance when you have real work to do."

Next he proved his courage by squarely turning his back on the fire and walking to the girl. He expected to feel the bite of lead at every step and was in a cold sweat when he reached the prisoner and nothing had happened. He examined her bonds and smiled evilly down into her terrified eyes.

"Be patient, little one," he murmured, softly patting her cheek. "Very soon you shall be at liberty. The naughty Jaguar sha'n't have you, my sweetmeat."

A sound at the fire caused him to wheel, a hand resting on his belt. But the Jaguar was doing nothing more ominous than greedily bolting the beans and corn, using his long knife in feeding himself. The act in itself was homely and honest; but considering the predicament of the outlaws it became sinisterly potential. For there was but one ration and the Jaguar was eating all of it.

This characteristic selfishness of the bandit filled Young Mexico's heart with a consuming rage. He stood motionless until he had forced his passion under control; then he strolled back to the fire and softly inquired—

"Where is my share?"

The Jaguar held the pan in one hand, his long knife in the other, and stared at his companion for several moments. Then striking his blade against the dish he fiercely upraided himself, saying:

"Unthinking pig that I am! I have swallowed it, all of it! Why did it not choke me? But listen, my young friend; don't think evil of me. It is habit. Ah, yes! Habit. For years I have trusted no one to cook for me. Think of it! With a fortune of gold and silver in my camp, with beautiful women in my power, I have not dared eat anything I had not cooked myself. Habit is strong. For the moment I forgot I was with a faithful man, forgot we had no other rations."

"It is nothing," calmly returned Mexico, the "killer" light in his eyes giving the lie to his indifference.

He knew he had been sent from the fire to give his companion a chance to bolt the food. Both were worn to the bone with continuous fighting and riding. He who had food would be stronger for the next ordeal.

"One must get strength when about to take a long journey," he went on. "I am young. I shall find food tomorrow."

"And yes," smoothly agreed the Jaguar.

"It is no more than fair that he who goes afoot should have food," Young Mexico added.

"A noble, generous thought," murmured the Jaguar.

"Now I think we had better sleep for an hour or so."

"Sleep," gently urged the Jaguar. "I have eaten. I feel stronger already. I will stand watch."

"As you say," carelessly agreed Mexico, drawing back his foot as though to retire,

then violently kicking forward and dashing the fire into the Jaguar's face and eliciting a scream of pain and rage.

AS HE delivered this unexpected attack young Mexico pulled a pistol from his belt and fired. But if the burning brands granted him the initial advantage they caused him to miss the mark; for in escaping the coals the Jaguar threw himself on his back and the bullet whistled harmlessly through his black hair. The report had scarcely sounded before the outlaw chief was on his feet. With a curse Mexico hurled his weapon, striking a glancing blow on the head and savagely lacerating the scalp.

In the next instant the Jaguar was leaping upon him, his long knife upraised in his right hand, for he dared not attempt to shift the weapon to his left and attempt to draw his pistol. Young Mexico, now fully committed to the issue, avoided the rush and drew his own knife, but did not refuse to rush to close quarters; for he must keep his adversary engaged so briskly as to prevent his using the pistol.

They came together, their knives locked at the guards. Then the Jaguar leaped away and crouched low and plucked the pistol from his hip. As his gaze devoured the tense form of his opponent he began to smile and chuckle hideously. A handful of coals faintly illuminated the scene and would furnish less light as the coals died down. Little spirals of smoke rose from the embers scattered over the rocky floor by Mexico's foot. Slowly the Jaguar raised and aimed the pistol. Mexico knew he could not leap to close quarters in time to dodge the lead and as an only alternative stooped and presented his right shoulder and hugged his head low.

The light was fading. Both forms were becoming blurred. The Jaguar astounded his foe by declaring—

"It's foolish to tell the man Carson where we may be found."

He accompanied his words by tossing his pistol toward the prisoner.

Young Mexico could scarcely believe in his luck, and breathed deep in relaxation.

"You feel much hope, my young friend," whispered the Jaguar. "And yet I shall kill you."

Young Mexico lacked nothing in physical courage. His prowess as a "killer" was well known from Santa Fé to Mexico City. And yet he could not help remembering that the Jaguar had never met his match in knife-play.

"But he will now," he said aloud.

"So, so? Will what, my young friend?" mocked the Jaguar, creeping forward, his knife moving in a slow circle ahead of him.

"Die! —— you!" cried Mexico, springing back toward his horse, not to escape but to gain the cover of the deep shadows.

And a wild gust of hope swept over him as he decided the lack of light would even up the odds. Let the duel become a contest of stealth and he asked no favors from fate. In the background of his mind lurked the buoyant thought that he might evade his antagonist and find the loaded pistol. Could he do that, he would risk bringing Carson on to the scene.

With a hissing scream the Jaguar darted after him, for the first time realizing his loss of advantage. Mexico gave ground, passing his horse and keeping close to the wall. Could he retreat until he reached the girl. . . .

But the Jaguar read his purpose and glided aside and headed him off, scuffling with his feet to locate the weapon. Young Mexico immediately pressed the attack to prevent this disaster, and for a minute the two shadows lunged and struck. In this exchange the Jaguar was slashed slightly across the wrist and his foe felt a hot pain in his forearm.

They separated with neither finding the pistol. "I have killed more than two score men with this knife," taunted the Jaguar, seeking to unnerve Mexico.

"Stabbed them all from behind," recklessly laughed the young bandit, his veins now hot with lust for the work ahead.

"You dog! You plotted to take my place. You! A hot-headed fool!" grated the Jaguar. "When I set out to join you it was to hunt you down and kill you. But yours shall not be an easy death, such as Pecos and others died. I will slice you to ribbons."

"Bush-cat! Half-breed Mexican dog!" jeered Mexico. "Bring the fighting to me."

With a rush the Jaguar accepted the challenge and again the knives slithered against each other. That clash convinced Mexico he was a novice beside the Jaguar, and before the latter could overcome the

handicap the gloom imposed his man was out of reach. This time his retreat brought him to his horse. The animal scented the blood-lust of the combatants and was trembling with fear. The Jaguar came flying in pursuit. Young Mexico seized the horse by the nose and backed him across the other's onward rush.

"Have it so!" yelled the Jaguar.

The next moment the horse was rearing above his master and the Jaguar was leaning forward and thrusting with the long knife.

For the first time Mexico's wild courage began to dwindle. Unwittingly he had forced a decided advantage on his enemy. Throughout their lonely flight from the Kiowas he had schemed to kill his chief. He knew the Jaguar entertained similar plans against his life. He was confident, however, he would find an opportunity to dispose of the chief as soon as the danger from the Indians had passed. While each was dependent on the other they had come upon Dane and his wife. The moment they rode off with the girl Mexico knew the issue was close at hand. After the Jaguar lost his horse the young outlaw would have attacked him had he not been hampered by the girl. And the Jaguar had withheld his hand for fear of harming the girl.

It all flashed through his mind as he inwardly blasphemed at his lack of wit. Why hadn't he sprung on the horse instead of driving the animal into the Jaguar's hands? Under his control the animal would have hunted the Jaguar down and stamped him to a pulp. Now the Jaguar was teaching the beast to destroy his master.

Ducking and twisting and keeping close to the wall to escape the madly pawing hoofs Mexico fought on the defensive, two objectives obsessing his thoughts; to find the pistol, and, that failing, to secure an opportunity of escaping from the hollow. One would require marvelous quickness of movement, the other would be a race between him and the maddened horse.

"Your good animal will carry me and the *senorita* in safety to my mountain home," taunted the Jaguar, leaning wide and slashing viciously.

The words gave Young Mexico a devilish inspiration. Could he but secure some means of blocking the first shock of contact he would clinch with the Jaguar. Could he but secure a grip on that terrible knife-hand he would back his strength to bring him victory. And all the time he had fought and dodged there had been a living shield at hand.

Working solely on the defensive he maneuvered into coaxing the Jaguar to spur ahead viciously. Escaping the rush by a hair's-breadth he darted to the girl. After him plunged the Jaguar before he could lift her to her feet. Again he avoided the onslaught of the crazed brute at the expense of a slash across his shoulders, but the Jaguar had not guessed his purpose. The outlaw chief, panting with rage, pressed the attack furiously, the figures being wildly mixed at times with only the darkness saving the man afoot.

Twice in quick succession chance blows from Mexico's knife bit into the Jaguar's legs. Then, insane by the incessant rearing of his steed, Mexico stabbed it in the flank. The horse became unmanageable and bucked and jumped out of control. With a yell of triumph Mexico ran across the hollow toward the girl, stepped on the Jaguar's pistol and fell on his face. Pivoting his rebellious mount on his hind feet, the Jaguar drove in his spurs. With a scream of pain the frantic animal leaped high and far and landed his forefeet on the head of the prostrate figure.

Fearing a trick, the Jaguar hesitated for a few moments before he jumped down and with outstretched knife gingerly prodded the silent form. There was no reaction. With a snarl the bandit chief jumped upon the corpse and stabbed it repeatedly, grunting and panting with every stroke. With his paroxysm of rage at last satiated he crawled back to the middle of the hollow and scraped the charred fragments of the dead fire together and managed to light them. The new fire was tardy in revealing the gory spectacle, and in his impatience to feast his gloating eyes the bandit threw on all the twigs remaining from the bundle the dead man had gathered just before they entered the basin.

"There! —— him! He looks right to me now!" laughed the Jaguar, squatting on his heels and glaring at the dead man.

HE REMEMBERED the girl and feared lest the horse had stepped on her, and ran to her side. At first he thought she was dead, then detected signs of life. She had swooned.

Removing the gag and unbinding her hands he rubbed her wrists. She opened her eyes and at first stared blankly into his face.

"You horrible man!" she next whispered.

"You'll change your tune when you're in my mountain home," he lightly assured. "Women have talked as you do, and then prayed me to keep them instead of sending them home."

"If you don't kill me now I shall kill myself at the first chance."

"I'll see to it that you do yourself no harm—until I'm willing," he mocked.

She snatched at the knife sticking from his belt, but her hands were numb, and he blocked the move easily.

"I like you," he admired. "You've got spirit. That dead dog there found sport in killing men. It's better sport to break a woman's spirit."

"You are a devil! There must be a God."

"I'm only interested in the devil," he purred. "He's taken good care of me for years." As he spoke he caught her hands and deftly tied her wrists together. "There, my little wildcat, I'll see to the horse and then we'll start for the Sangre de Cristo range."

Her eyes stared at something beyond him. He twisted about and beheld the horse standing with his ears pricked toward the narrow slope. Before he could gain his feet the animal gave a shrill neigh and trotted for the exit. With a cry to the horse to halt the Jaguar ran after him. Already the hoofs were clattering up the rough path.

With a howl of fear the Jaguar continued the pursuit until half-way up the steep slope, then wheeled and ran back to extinguish the fire. A pistol cracked and a bullet grazed his head.

"Stand where you are!" called a clear voice.

He faced slowly about and beheld the slim figure of Carson lightly running down the path. He had dropped his pistol and was armed only with a knife. A single glance told the Jaguar the newcomer was alone; nor did the frontiersman possess a second pistol.

"I praise the saints that you came, Señor Carson," lisped the Jaguar, mincing forward, knife in hand. "I need your horse for the *senorita* to ride."

Without glancing toward her Carson called—

"Mrs. Dane!"

"I'm all right if you can get me out of here," she sobbed. "I'm tied up. Until a bit ago they kept me gagged. He killed that man."

"Come, that's one good deed you've done, Red Jaguar," approved Carson, balancing his heavy knife.

"He's waiting for you to go along with him."

"That will be as it may be," Carson quietly replied. "But we seem to be wasting time in words. The young lady's husband is waiting for her to return to him."

"Thank God! Then he really lives!" Blanche hysterically cried.

"Only a scalp wound. Now, sir! Let us to business. The light seems good. It will hold if we hurry."

"My dead friend insisted on fighting in the dark," informed the Jaguar, taking a wide step to one side.

"We'll get along faster with it burning," said Carson, straightening out in midair until the point of his blade flashed within an inch of the outlaw's eyes.

With a startled malediction the Jaguar fell back and began to wonder if it would not be better to kick the fire apart. As if reading his thoughts Carson blocked his way and taunted:

"I thought you were a knife-fighter. What are you up to? Trying to tire me out? And yet, I might have known you were a poor, hang-dog coward after seeing you sacrifice your men to the Kiowas. Was your miserable hide worth such treachery?"

"You lie! You saw nothing!" panted the Jaguar.

Carson laughed lightly, parried a thrust and ripped the Jaguar's shirt from wrist to shoulder.

"I saw you climb the wall and fight with an Indian. I saw Heart-Eater run among you and drag a man away and scalp him. Did you know we found the treasure?"

The Jaguar circled soft-footed in search of an opening and made no reply.

"When you shot Dane from his saddle you should have turned back and run off four mules packed with silver—that is, if the two of you dared to go against old Pop Williams. I didn't come up until

you had carried Mrs. Dane off. But can't we get ahead a bit faster?"

Thinking he detected carelessness in the lowered point the Jaguar sprang to close quarters. The frontiersman's knife caught his and for a moment the blades remained locked, the two staring into each other's eyes. Then lightly as drifting thistledown the Jaguar leaped aside and was again on the defensive.

"Boy's play," condemned Carson, still smiling. "Mrs. Dane, don't worry. It will be necessary for me to kill this man, but you are perfectly safe."

As he spoke these reassuring words he turned his head slightly, and the Jaguar with a grunt of joy sprang in. But the pose was a trap and before the outlaw could sense his danger Carson had blocked his deadly thrust and with his left hand had seized his wrist.

"I can fight with either hand!" shrieked the Jaguar, shifting the knife.

"But not with me," grimly returned Carson, thrusting him through the heart.

With a shrill cry Blanche collapsed and began sobbing piteously. Carson whistled to his horse. When the animal trotted down into the bowl Young Mexico's mount followed at his heels. Much pleased at sight of the second animal Carson turned to the girl and quickly released her from her bonds and then brought her his saddle-canteen and allowed her to drink deeply.

"I've suffered so! I've suffered so!" she moaned.

"But it's all past," he soothed. "Think how your husband has suffered. Think of his joy at your return! You've been brave in danger. You mustn't be weak when the danger is over."

"But I can never thank you," she wept.

"I'm glad to hear it. And you mustn't try. Now let's see if you can stand till I get you on a horse—my horse."

CHAPTER XII

HOW POP WILLIAMS PREACHED TWO SERMONS

THE girl clung to Carson's horse as the animal carefully picked his way through the night and followed his master up the rocky slope. The frontiersman was afoot, leading Young Mexico's mount. Now that there was nothing more to fear from the machinations of the Sangre de Cristo bandits Carson found time to wonder why Williams and Dane had not followed him to aid in the rescue of the girl. Or, if Dane was incapacitated by his wound, why not Williams alone. This point troubled him.

Blanche was so overwhelmed by her deliverance that she failed to obtain a proper perspective of what had happened, and of what had failed to happen. It was sufficient for her to know her husband was but slightly injured. Later, she would be puzzled at his and Williams' failure to ride after Carson. Her only thought was that she was safe and going back to her husband.

When any remembrance of the horrible hours in the hollow obtruded on her feverish joy the recollections became unreal, a phantasmagoria of devils fighting over a ghost of a woman. As she bowed low over her horse and tried to pick out Carson's slim form ahead she almost expected to behold a halo playing about him.

"Now we can move faster," he whispered as they left the rocks and he swung into the saddle.

"They may have passed this point," she fearfully suggested.

"No; they wait for us," he comforted, dreading lest she might question why they waited.

He rode by her side, keeping the horses at a sharp gallop. Williams had said Dane's hurt was superficial. Then why hadn't the man sought his wife? Of course he would be helpless to follow Carson without Williams' guidance, but why hadn't Williams come? Whether Dane was slightly or mortally wounded it was not like the old man to hold back when a woman was to be rescued. It was a disquieting muddle.

"Is that the camp?" suddenly cried the girl.

"Yes. They show their fire too openly. Mrs. Dane, I'm a trifle worried. I'm afraid Williams has met with some accident. I don't understand why he wasn't at my heels when I entered the basin. Your husband would have no idea where to look for us, but Williams wouldn't have hesitated a minute. He knows this country as well, probably much better, than I do."

"Why, I had supposed you had told them to wait. Why, Mr. Carson! Ellery never

would have held back while I was in danger. Oh, Mr. Carson! I've been selfishly thinking only of myself. I pray no harm has come to him."

"None has," calmed Carson, shading his eyes. "They're at the fire. A redskin would laugh at such a big fire. Must be of your husband's making. Pop must have felt very safe to let him. But there they are, busy with some cooking. I could tell Pop's buckskins a mile off. Smoked so yellow by so many lodge-fires. Seem to be cooking."

"Cooking?" muttered Blanche, unable to conceal the jolt this culinary suggestion inflicted. "But of course. They knew you'd bring me back—that we'd be hungry."

"That must be it," muttered Carson, staring in amazement at the two figures before the fire. Then to himself, "Great buffalo! But they took it for granted I'd fetch her back. Hi! Pop! Dane!"

Ellery waved his hand without raising his head from his task. Carson violently reined in his horse, seized Blanche's steed by the bridle and swung him about, and cried—

"A trap!"

Before the girl could even voice her astonishment, and before Carson could clap spurs to his mount, a double line of Indian braves rose from the ground and blocked their retreat.

"Indians!" blankly exclaimed Blanche.

"Trapped!" groaned Carson, making no resistance as the savages crowded 'round him and snatched his weapons away. "I knew we were in for it when your husband didn't rush to meet you, didn't even call out. He and Williams are prisoners. Two of the beggars are wearing their clothes. Who leads the Kiowas?"

This was addressed to the crowding, mocking mass of warriors.

"Ten-piakia. The white man and white squaw will get down," commanded a harsh voice.

"Do as they tell you," warned Carson, leaping to the ground.

Quaking with terror, Blanche dismounted and together with Carson was hurried forward to the fire. On one side stood the four pack-mules, eased of their burdens, and the two horses. On the ground, tied and gagged, were Williams and Dane, minus their hunting-shirts. The latter's eyes shone with relief on beholding his bride, although her coming meant new danger for her. But she was alive and safe for the moment. Old Williams' face was tragic as he sought to convey information to Carson. Blanche would have run to her husband's side, but the warriors pulled her and Carson to the opposite side of the fire and motioned for them to be seated on a robe. Carson had no dreams of escaping, for the red men were banked several circles deep around him.

"I come to talk with Heart-Eater," he boldly announced.

"Ten-piakia is here," was the guttural response; and the chief emerged from the background, limping from a wound in the leg, and seated himself some dozen feet from the frontiersman. "The medicine of the Kiowas is very strong."

"If not for me you would have no medicine. Why are my friends treated like Osage Indians?" fiercely demanded Carson.

"Is the white man's tongue clean to ask that?"

"It is. You swore by your gods we should go free if your *taime* was returned. Break your word and your medicine will be broken."

"Heart-Eater spoke with a straight tongue when he placed his hands on the Sun, the Buffalo and the Peyote. The white man spoke with a twisted tongue."

"You lie, Ten-piakia! The Kiowa Nation will never grow fat on lies," thundered Carson.

"The white man broke his word. He killed Big-Knife," calmly replied the chief. His warriors muttered angrily.

"Because Big-Knife shot at him when his back was turned."

"Big-Knife travels among the stars. He is not here to answer the white man," sneered the chief.

"You know I speak the truth. The Kiowas have boasted it paid them better to ransom prisoners than to steal horses. I alone killed Big-Knife. Set the two men and woman free and I will give you a talking paper that shall bring you a wagon filled with goods from Bent's."

Heart-Eater smiled mockingly; then fiercely cried:

"Our *taime* is angry because white hands have touched it. It allowed Big-Knife to be killed so we would know it is angry. It will call for other deaths among the Kiowas unless we give it gifts. Ansote knows what gifts it asks."

The *taime*-keeper came forward and glared vindictively at Carson, and tersely announced:

"The 'woman' *taime* asks the scalp of Big-Little-Man. The 'bear' *taime* asks the scalp of the old gray wolf (Williams). The 'man' *taime* asks the scalp of the young man."

"What about the white woman?" demanded Carson, his voice calm and indifferent while his soul bubbled in fear for Blanche.

"She shall be a Kiowa's squaw. She shall have the white blood washed out of her. Women soon forget their white blood."

"You tried to kill Red Jaguar and the man called Young Mexico, and you could not. I will trade their scalps for the woman."

Admiration and envy were reflected in Heart-Eater's visage, and he cut in—

"Big-Little-Man has killed them?"

"Both are dead. I found them together. I came away alone with the woman."

"Then if they are dead you have nothing to trade. If they were alive I would make trade with you," jeered Heart-Eater.

"Ten-piakia, hear the medicine-talk of the man who gave your *taime* back to you. Harm either of my friends and your *taime* shall be stolen again and never return."

The audience stirred uneasily. They ranked Carson far above other white men. They knew he had traversed the entire western half of the continent. From many tribes they had heard of his lonely journeyings when strong bands of trappers remained inactive for fear of the red men. He had borne a charmed life.

"What does the keeper say to those words?" demanded an aged warrior.

Ansote promptly replied:

"The *taime* knows best what it wants. It asks for gifts. Shall the Kiowas refuse?"

A general negative rumbled through the massed circle. Ansote continued:

"The white man boasts of his medicine and say the *taime* shall grow weak and be lost. If he has big medicine why is he a prisoner of the Kiowas?"

A chorus of approval answered this bit of logic. Granted that Carson had been invulnerable, then all the greater was the victory of the *taime* in making him a prisoner. Demands for immediate torture ran through the assemblage.

MORE to switch the line of thought than from expectation of scoring deeply Carson cried out:

"There must be one Kiowa who will say a good word for me. Where is the man who carried a child in his teeth while running from the Jaguar, and who was saved by the bullets of Big-Little-Man and his friends?"

Heart-Eater grinned at him mockingly, and replied:

"Where is he? Is he a bird that hides in the clouds. Or is he a snake that crawls under the rocks? Why does he keep hidden? White man, when you traded the *taime* for your lives you told us of this man you saved. I have talked with my warriors; no one knows of what you speak. Did you dream it?"

The Indians laughed heartily at this piece of sarcasm and renewed their calls for the torture. Carson was electrified to hear old Williams' voice calling above the din—

"Horsemen coming, Kit. I hear their hoofs."

Savages pounced upon him and roughly replaced the gag he had managed to spit out.

Carson realized the old man had detected the hoof-beats because of his position on the ground, and that the Indians had failed to do so because none were reclining with ear to earth, also on account of the general confusion. He lifted his voice and cried out:

"Kiowas come who are not blind. They are coming now. They will bring honest hearts. Big-Little-Man will talk with them."

Instantly the Indians became silent and stared at the speaker curiously. There were no sounds to indicate the approach of horsemen. Ansote mocked:

"The white man fights for time, thinking his cunning will set him free if he lives long enough. Brothers, he has some medicine. He may escape if he lives long enough. The *taime* are hungry. They will grow angry if kept waiting."

Heart-Eater rose and gave an order. Several braves heaped more wood on the fire and the flames leaped high and brightly illumined the plain for some distance. He gave a second order and two warriors dragged forward a crudely constructed cross, such as the Pawnees used in sacrificing to the morning and evening stars.

The frontiersman, fighting for time, struggled fiercely as the savages attempted to seize him and strip him and tie him to the cross. A battle royal ensued, for the Indians were restrained from mortal violence, while Carson fought to do all the damage he could. Being unused to fisticuffs the Indians at first gave ground before his smashing drives.

Brave after brave was knocked flat and the prisoner began to have hopes of reaching a stack of weapons. With a howl of fear Heart-Eater reached over the struggling mass and struck with the butt-end of a lance, knocking one of his own men senseless. Swinging the weapon again he succeeded in cracking Carson over the head and beating him to his knees. In a few moments he was seized and bound.

His faintness quickly passed and he was raised to his feet. About him glared battered visages. One warrior, spitting out his front teeth, tried to get at him with a knife and was checked only after a desperate struggle.

"The white man's medicine gave a dying kick," snarled Heart-Eater. "Now it is dead. Make him ready for the fire."

They would have cut his clothing from him if not for a loud shout from the plain. The unexpected intrusion turned the executioners into so many images. The call was repeated in the Kiowa dialect; and Heart-Eater gnawed his lips that even friends could approach without being discovered.

"I told you that Kiowas with honest hearts were coming!" panted Carson.

His show of confidence was superb although he realized there was no reason to expect mercy from the newcomers.

Several young bucks leaped on their horses and raced out into the darkness to reconnoiter. Those remaining seized their weapons and scattered, after pegging Carson to the ground by thrusting lances through his bonds.

"Dohasan! Dohasan!" shouted the scouts from the darkness.

The Indians at once massed themselves before the fire, their eyes glittering with excitement. Dohasan, or "Little-Bluff" as the whites called him, had no rival in the Kiowa Nation. That he should arrive in time to witness the feeding of the *taime* was another evidence of the medicine's potency. Heart-Eater alone was not perfectly satisfied by his superior's unexpected arrival.

While Dohasan had been away trading with the Crows his subordinate had grown to think of himself as a mighty chief; and surely never had the Kiowa counted such a coup under any leader as they had counted in exterminating the outlaws. Another factor that gravely disturbed his mind was the prescience of the captive in foretelling Dohasan's coming.

The oncoming band commenced a chant, and at each pause the warriors of the Kata tribal division, the aristocracy of the Kiowas, which proudly claimed Dohasan as a member, yelped back a welcome in concert. Carson was released from the lances and helped to his feet as the renowned chief and his small following entered the firelight.

Dohasan dismounted and strode up to Heart-Eater saying:

"Runners bring me strange news. They say you have lost the *taime* and got it back, and that you have fought and killed many white men."

"The runners spoke with straight tongues. We have lost and found the *taime*. We have killed many white men and we have prisoners," quietly replied Heart-Eater.

"It is well," laconically replied Dohasan, starting to examine the prisoners.

As he recognized Carson he experienced a twinge of jealousy that such a prize should have been captured by Ten-piakia. It would feature the Winter-count and be handed down to posterity.

"Big-Little-Man came to visit the mighty Dohasan, not knowing he was away, and is treated like an Osage," indignantly informed Carson. "If not for him and his friends the Kiowas would have no *taime* now. Big-Little-Man killed the Osage and gave the medicine to the Kiowas after Heart-Eater had sworn on the Sun, the Buffalo and the Peyote that the whites should go free."

"He killed Big-Knife after giving him the *taime*," broke in Heart-Eater.

"Big-Knife tried to shoot Big-Little-Man in the back after receiving the *taime*," Carson defended. "Heart-Eater has broken his promise, after speaking for the Kiowa Nation. My medicine told me Dohasan was coming. The Kiowas would not believe my words."

Dohasan turned to Heart-Eater, who mumbled—

"The white man's ears are like a wolf's."

"It is good to have scouts out," murmured Dohasan gently. "Had my band been Utes they could have crept very close without being seen."

"Heart-Eater's dark face grew purple under the veiled rebuke.

Carson boldly continued:

"My medicine also told me things I would not speak to Heart-Eater, because he said my tongue was twisted. I will tell Dohasan, for his heart is honest."

And to Ten-piakia's amazement the prisoner related the account of the battle at the ravine, giving a wealth of little details that was beyond the ken of any one participant to have noted. As he touched on point after point some warrior, anxious to be identified as prominent in the massacre, would yelp out confirmation.

Dohasan bowed his head and respectfully said—

"Big-Little-Man's medicine is very strong."

Heart-Eater, afraid of the impression his prisoner was making, angrily broke in, charging—

"He tells much that is twisted."

And he repeated the frontiersman's claim concerning the warrior, who carried a child in his teeth, and who was saved by the rifle-fire of the whites. To Heart-Eater's astonishment and chagrin his superior curtly informed:

"His words are straight. It was Broken Bow. He carried a boy between his teeth while running from white men near Wolf Creek. He and the others who escaped met me and told about it."

FOR the first time since his capture Carson entertained a bit of hope.

"I ask Broken Bow to speak," he requested.

A middle-aged warrior, above the average of his companions in height, stepped from Dohasan's party and eloquently described the fight between the small village and the van of Red Jaguar's men, and told how the life-saving rifle-fire from the ridge permitted the survivors to escape and find Dohasan's trail, which they had followed until meeting him returning from the Crows.

"My friends have four mules carrying silver. The Kiowas can have mules and silver to set us on the trail to Bent's Fort," announced Carson as Broken Bow finished.

"We have the mules and the silver," replied Dohasan, puckering his brows as if meditating over some problem.

"The *taime* asks for scalps," spoke up Ansote.

"Is the medicine still hungry after all the scalps Heart-Eater and his warriors have taken?" curiously inquired Dohasan.

Then wheeling on Carson he caught him by the shoulder and raised his knife. Carson met his gaze unflinchingly and waited for the blow, and prayed his companions might meet as merciful an end. The knife flashed forward and severed the bonds securing his wrists. Then the chief stooped and freed his feet.

Facing about he ordered:

"Set the others free, for we are not at war with the Hanpoko.* We are at war with the Tehaneko (Texans). Big-Little-Man and his friends are Hanpoko. They have returned the *taime*. Big-Knife was killed because his heart was bad. The prisoners shall go free and take their mules and hair-metal. Our medicine does not like Hanpoko scalps. Big-Little-Man shall promise to send me one wagon filled with red cloth, so many guns—" opening and closing his hands to count twenty—"a keg of powder and two kegs of spirit-water."

"Dohasan shall have what he asks for. The wagon shall start when I reach Bent's Fort. Some of the Kiowas shall go with me to drive the wagon here. The mules carrying the silver shall haul the wagon."

Dohasan called for volunteers to ride to the fort, safe conduct being given by Carson. The warriors hesitated; then Broken Bow stepped forward, saying—

"Here is one who believes Big-Little-Man means no wrong."

Two others of the village Carson had saved from the bandits followed his example.

"It is well. You shall start now," decided Dohasan, avarice showing in his small eyes.

Rubbing his legs and arms to restore circulation, old Williams staggered into the circle, declaring:

"The white men have medicine-rites to perform before taking the trail to Bent's. Two bad Tehaneko must be buried. They are in the Rocky Place that is tabu to the Kiowas and the white men must bury them. It will be soon finished. Kiata (first light) will find us riding for Bent's."

* Americans—Literally, "Trappers."

"For Heaven's sake, let us be starting while we can," Carson shot at him from the corner of his mouth and speaking in English.

"No, Kit," sternly replied old Williams. "If I don't do what I'm foreordained to do, what's the use of having any religion? It's writ in my dreams I'm to preach a sermon over them two hell-hounds; and I'll do it if I stick here alone."

Carson capitulated, and explained to Dohasan—

"Two men, the last of the bad Tehaneko, the two I found in the Rocky Place, and left, must be buried, or they will bring bad luck to the Kiowas."

"The old gray wolf shall go in alone," consented Dohasan, not fancying the arrow-making place should be contaminated by the bandit dead.

In no wise deterred by this restriction Williams found his horse and eagerly mounted, and the entire party was soon in motion. Dane now had time to inquire how they happened to be free, and Carson explained to him and Blanche.

"It shows he has a sense of honor and a sense of gratitude," said Dane.

"It shows he is a cunning old fox," mumbled Williams. "When he got back and found Heart-Eater had won the biggest victory scored in years by the Kiowas against the whites he naturally got afraid Heart-Eater might be thought as big a chief as he is. That's why he made the Injuns think Heart-Eater had slipped up a bit. Thank your medicine, boy, it wa'n't Little-Bluff that snagged us. We'd be baking on the cross now if he had."

"Reckon Pop scores the bull's-eye," murmured Carson. "He's jealous of any one counting too big a coup. But we talk too much."

And he spurred on and joined Dohasan.

Along the edge of the tabu hollow sat the Kiowas on their ponies, watching with admiration the bowed figure of old Williams as he slowly toiled up the slope in the first gray light of morning.

Without a word Williams climbed on his horse. Carson whispered—

"All finished?"

"Kit, I'd give a wagon-load of rum if you could 'a' been there to hear me!" solemnly cried the old man. "Seems if the right words never come faster to me. Seems if those scum just wilted and frizzled as I preached their finish. Well, they're buried, and if you see any small black snakes just kill 'em. The Jaguar may be in any one of 'em. Or a timber-wolf with a black spot on his saddle. That's Young Mexico. While I was talking I seen him in the shape of a wolf, chasing after a trapper."

"Are we really free to go, Mr. Carson?" tremulously whispered Blanche as the band cantered out on the plain and came to a halt.

Broken Bow and his two companions motioned to the whites and started toward the west at an easy canter.

"Yes; we're safe now," assured Carson. "They're riding slow so that the mules can keep up. But where are the mules? Dane, you and your wife ride on after the Indians. Pop seems to be slow in getting the mules started.

Carson turned back and beheld Williams passing something to Dohasan. Then he drove the mules across the open plain.

Galloping up to him Carson inquired — "What held you up?"

"Had something for the chief," explained Williams, combing his beard and staring off into space. "Medicine is medicine, whether white or red. And if it's hungry, it's hungry. No reason why it shouldn't be fed, either. Mayn't do any good, but it can't do you any harm to feed it. No use taking chances even with the Kiowa *taime* when you can play the game without troubling yourself."

Carson looked back and saw Dohasan elevate a lance, from which dangled two fresh scalps.

THE PARABOLA OF A PROPHET

By J. B. H. Hurst

Author of "The Color of Her Soul," "Dirty Jim," etc.

THE *Patiala* was discharging cargo in Madras, from all four hatches; and she was surrounded by yelling, screaming natives, in sampans and barges. Her holds were full of other natives, all looking much alike, hardly distinguishable by a white man, and clothed in similar dirty loin-cloths to their fellow citizens overside. Babus, swathed in linen, tallied cargo, competing with the white officers instead of assisting them, and doing all they could to steal.

The heat was terrific, and Third Officer Sesson, at number three hatch knew quite well that his tally-man was in league with the foreman of stevedores down below, and the lighter *waller* overside, to dispute his tally and put in a fake claim for missing cargo which had been duly lowered into the lighter—a conspiracy which did not tend to improve his temper, and which, since he was discharging from both the port and starboard winches at the same time, was not easy to frustrate.

The lighter on the starboard side was full, and the smirking babu approached Sesson to compare tallies before signing. With the babu was a burly native, the *serang* or foreman of the lighter. The tallies agreed, except for the small matter of a bale of piece-goods, of the value of about a thousand rupees.

There resulted an argument, and Sesson ordered the lighter *serang* to discharge his lighter for the purpose of making another count—a full hour's work. The babu protested, as well he might. He knew the bale was in the lighter, and, if he could successfully steal it, his share of the spoil would be fifty rupees. The *serang*, also, had no desire to produce that bale, because there was twenty rupees in it for his needy family. He had no family, but a native does not let his conscience trouble him about a little matter of that sort.

The talk grew warm; the poor downtrodden natives became abusive, because they knew that, if Sesson struck either of them, the native judge in Madras would send him to prison. Ever since some idiot in England had urged the appointment of native judges successfully, the Madras presidency had been a place where an Englishman looked in vain for justice. The natives of Madras being perhaps the worst liars and thieves on earth, had regarded the legalizing of the native judiciary as an endorsement of their lack of ethical sensibility. And the judges had grown rich.

The affair of the bale of piece-goods came to a head when the *serang* called Sesson a *sour cabutcher*, *makerchute*, etc., which are not nice names. Sesson lost his temper alto-

gether and struck the *serang*, who promptly fell overboard and swam unseen to another lighter. There resulted a huge outcry. About a thousand natives surrounded Sesson, crying for his blood, and only the utmost effort of the other officers, who threatened the mob with revolvers, saved him from being torn to pieces.

But the captain had no choice but to hoist the police flag, and Sesson went ashore to jail. The bale of piece-goods was, of course, found in the lighter. But the body of the supposedly dead *serang* was never found. The natives said the sharks got him!

They tried him, with a native judge on the bench—the first time an Englishman had ever been tried for his life by a black man—and the judge had decided to hang Sesson before he heard the evidence. Every one knew this, naturally, and a large crowd of natives was on hand to enjoy the proceedings when court opened.

They were greatly upset when they found their way barred by vulgarly speaking Tommies—several hundred British soldiers having discussed the matter, and passed a resolution to save Sesson from the hangman. They crowded the court. Curiously enough, all their officers had gone fishing or shooting, or something.

But the soldiers behaved themselves. Only when the judge was charging the jury did they say anything. One of them spoke a few words, and the rest agreed loudly. The jury went pale, the judge nearly white. Nothing was said about contempt of court. A trembling foreman, very gray under his black skin, mumbled something, and the judge sentenced Sesson to a month in prison, which, as he explained, had already been served.

The spokesman of the soldiers told the judge, speaking as a friend, that next time he was appointed to try a white man he must plead sickness, and take a day off. He also said a few kind words to the jury. Then the regiment took Sesson out, and made him very drunk.*

Sesson was twenty-seven years of age, and he held a master's certificate. At the age of thirteen he had joined the school-ship *Conway*. Thus, he had been a sailor for fourteen years, and knew no other work. Recovering from the hospitality of the Tommies, he discovered that there was no work for him. No firm of ship-owners in India dare give him a job, because the native shippers—the poor, downtrodden, abused, slave-driven natives, so cruelly ground under the iron heel of the British—threatened to boycott any firm which did so; and to be boycotted by the native merchants meant ruin. And Sesson had no money.

Very naturally, he tried to ship in some vessel leaving India; but all such ships were strangely overrun with applicants for positions as mates; and, which was the limit, even the sailors' boarding-houses refused him credit. Little matters of this kind are not referred to by the fat, greasy gentlemen who wear turbans and melt the hearts of silly men and old women by their pleadings—by their eloquent beggings for help for the poor natives of India, so cruelly used by the British, etc. etc., etc.

It seemed, then, that Sesson had two choices: either to starve to death or to end the affair by a more rapid method. If he had known any one ashore of his own people, any men of position, it would have been a different matter. But he didn't—he was a sailor, ignorant of the shore, and afraid of its way of doing things.

The kindly Tommies stationed in Madras would have helped him, had they known how he was situated, but he was too proud to tell. And one dark night he walked along the Madras breakwater, weak with hunger, and dumb with despair. Two natives followed him unseen.

HE REACHED the end of the breakwater, and paused. He swam well, therefore it would be necessary to hit his head on the stone when he dived. This, however, would not be difficult. He looked up at the stars, and tried to grin. Then he heard a native at his elbow. He turned, and recognized—he was never quite sure how he did this so quickly—the man he had murdered!

The notion that he might be looking at a ghost never entered his head, because he had never believed he had killed the *serang*. He knew the native too well. And the fellow had actually followed him, knowing his condition and guessing at the reason for his walk along the breakwater, to mock him in his misery. Realizing this, Sesson felt almost happy. He listened, smiling, to the

*A student of history will find full details of this trial in the court records of Madras for the year 1894.

low words of abuse the half-drunk native poured out. Then he summoned his remaining strength, and struck.

Five minutes later, he sat, weak and sick, looking at his handiwork—a badly disfigured native, with several broken ribs, and a face which would never again look as it had been accustomed to look. But it would be fully an hour before the *serang* would know there was anything the matter with him.

The joy of conquest evaporated, and Sesson turned again to his job, which, for some reason or other, seemed easier. Then he became aware of the other native—hitherto hidden behind a railway truck—who approached him salaaming. Sesson was mildly astonished. That any native in Madras—or, seeing his rags, any native in India—would approach in this manner, was decidedly unexpected. Perhaps the fellow, also guessing at his intention, imagined he possessed something of value which he would leave behind.

"No," he growled, "my bequests are nil. Get to —— out of here, and leave me to do my dying in peace."

"*Sahib*, I am but a poor messenger. But one whom I obey sent me to tell the *sahib* that the *Burra Sahib* wishes him to go to him."

Sesson laughed bitterly.

"I was just about to go, and I thought you guessed it. But why call the devil the *Burra Sahib?*"

"I have never seen this *Burra Sahib*, who is so much more powerful than any other *sahib*—more powerful than even the viceroy *sahib*—but he is in Calcutta, not Jehunna," the native made explanation.

Sesson stared at the man.

"More powerful than the viceroy," he muttered, without thinking what that meant. "But I'm not going to Calcutta. I'm going to hell, it's nearer. I haven't the price of a ticket to any other place."

"It does not matter."

"Eh?"

"About the money, *sahib*. But will the *sahib* pledge his honor not to speak of what I am about to tell him?"

"Yes. But go ahead. I'm in a hurry. Want to get this thing over with. I won't tell the fishes."

The native produced an envelope from among his voluminous linen wrappings.

"Here are five hundred rupees, and a *chit*. On the *chit* is an address written in the *sahib's* tongue. Take the money, and go to the place of the address." He kicked the unconscious *serang*. "Never mind this cattle. I will see that it is disposed of so that it gives no more trouble."

Sesson was astounded. Was the native fooling him? He could not assimilate the possibility of any one giving him money, and his next words were a vague muttering which the native translated into a question concerning the *serang*.

So the native laughed as he answered:

"Why kill a mule when he can be made to drag a cart? Never mind that. Here, take the money, *sahib*," and he thrust the envelope into Sesson's hand.

Mechanically, the Englishman opened it, examining the contents with the aid of a match. Then he saw that the native was walking away. This would not do. He might have to account, explain how it came into his possession. For the money was actually in the envelope.

"Here—hold on, come back," he shouted.

But the native took no notice, so Sesson followed him.

It was like a game of hide and seek, among the shadows and 'round and about the trucks; the native flitting along elusively on his bare feet, and Sesson following heavily. The chase lasted perhaps ten minutes, and led back again to the end of the breakwater. Sesson thought he caught a glimpse of the fluttering linen, then he brought up, open-mouthed. He shouted, but there was no reply. He stood alone where he had intended to kill himself. The philanthropic native had vanished, and with him, apparently, he had taken the unconscious *serang*.

There was no doubt about it. Not a soul was in sight, and search as he would not a soul could he find. Hot and uncomfortable, Sesson came again to the edge of the breakwater, wondering what the devil to do about it.

The money was there. He was not dreaming. And with the money was a small piece of paper—the *chit*, with the Calcutta address, he supposed, because there was not enough light to read by, and he had no more matches. He stowed the stuff away in a pocket. Then he considered.

He was saved from immediate want. Indeed, he was quite comfortably fixed. He had the equivalent of better than a

hundred dollars, in a country where money went a long way. But to keep it meant accepting some sort of an obligation. What sort of a man was it who sent five hundred rupees to a down-and-out stranger? And then left him to do as he wanted with it? It looked fishy. Ah, perhaps it was counterfeit. That, however, could be soon determined. And who was this *Burra Sahib* who had more power than the viceroy?

Rot—there could not be such a person. But the five hundred was not rot. Was this *Burra Sahib* white or black? To keep the money might mean binding himself to some criminal. So he revolved the affair, coming to no definite conclusion.

Dawn was breaking. The sampans of the fishermen were putting out to sea, their outriggers dipping like the wings of drunken sea-birds to the morning breeze. A bank of jagged clouds hung over the horizon. And Sesson was all in—tired, hungry and worn-out. In the end, his physical need decided him, and his curiosity compelled him to go through with the adventure.

He had to chose between accepting the money and suicide; and to spend it without going to Calcutta would bring him again to the end of the breakwater, with a guilty conscience. If the money were good, he would go to Calcutta. But he did not grasp the reasoning of the shrewd mind which had sent the money—the mind which saw exactly what Sesson would do, knowing he was a normal man, to whom suicide would be the last resort. He turned away from the sea, and made his way into town. He had no trouble with the money, it was perfectly good.

II

HE REACHED Calcutta in the early evening, and went to a hotel. After dinner, he asked a few directions, and went for a walk. The address was a part of the city unknown to him, but he had been careful to tell no one about it. He rather wondered at a feeling of awe that had grown in his mind, concerning the mysterious personage he was going to see. Any psychologist could have explained it, but Sesson was a sailor, and the sea had bred in him vague superstitions for which he could not find words.

The smell of wood-fires hung over the city like an incense burned to the wraith of the dead day. There was no moon, and the bats flew boldly, flying so close that Sesson often brushed a hand before his face, not knowing that the bat is perhaps the most wonderfully skilful animal in the world, able to avoid anything in the dark. Barefooted natives hurried past him. In the beginning he saw a few white men, but they grew scarcer as he went along. The streets became darker and narrower, until Sesson lost his sense of direction, and, finally, lost his way altogether.

He did not trust his Hindustani sufficiently well to ask his way of a native, and the peculiarity of his position made him unwilling to ask a policeman—even if he had met one. He stood in the shadow of a high wall, in a rather deserted lane, trying to think out a course. Then he jumped, repressing a scream, when he felt a touch on his arm. Turning rapidly, he looked into the face of a very old native.

"If the heaven-born will condescend to come with me, I will show him his desire."

Sesson understood the bat well enough to grasp the meaning of the words, but he had no intention of going with a stranger to an unknown destination.

He shook his head as a reply.

"It's all right, *sahib*," the man spoke English. "One who gave you a *chit* in Madras sent word that you might need assistance. I, too, am in the service of the *Burra Sahib*."

There it was again—this *Burra Sahib* business. But it looked all right. That is, it looked as right as it had ever looked. The adventure grew more interesting as it developed.

"Lead on, Mac," Sesson spoke as calmly as he could, but the place, and his position, did not lend to calmness, and his voice trembled in spite of himself.

The old native salaamed and began to patter along, leading Sesson through a maze of narrow lanes, between high, tree-shaded walls, reeking with age and mystery. Through the night the river-like voice of Calcutta droned, and the eternal smells mingled in a prayer for air; while the ex-ship's officer, half believing he was dreaming, felt like a tenuous person who had slipped into a page of the "Arabian Nights," leaving the world of solid things, and sacrificing his freedom for five hundred rupees.

They reached a small square, where four lanes met; and the old native stopped.

"Well?" Sesson heard his voice racking like that of a scared woman. With an effort he dragged it near to normal. "Well, what are we waiting for?"

"Me, sah," an enormously fat Bengali babu stepped out of the shadow of one of the lanes. "Me, sah—it is onlee right, is it not, that a gentleman should take you to the end of your journee?"

"If you say so," gasped Sesson, while the old native disappeared like a withered bat at the dawn. "Which way do we go?"

"Down this dirtee street, sah. But please do not think that I am a native of these parts. Only business could bring me here—the *Burra Sahib* needs me. I have a wife, sah, and two children—at Deccan, sah. It is a costlee business to keep the little ones as my station demands, sah."

Sesson grinned. At least, this fat babu was human, and real. He dropped two silver rupees into the ham-like hand, and the babu bowed like a grotesque court chamberlain.

"I thank you, sah, for the fee. Gentlemen, like you and me, must live."

And he went ahead, puffing, as Sesson was reminded, like the old Liverpool tug *Wrestler*, and making wonderful speed for his tonnage.

They had not far to go. The babu appeared to be the inner messenger, and he stopped before the high, nail-studded gate of an old native house, with massive walls, and the general solidity and ability to withstand attack, of some dwelling of the Middle Ages. The babu knocked on the gate. There was no answer, and he knocked again—differently. This time it was opened—by a bearded Sikh, a typical fighting Punjabee, with a diamond in his turban, and a sword at his hip.

He nodded contemptuously to the babu, and saluted Sesson deferentially. The Benagli whispered politely,

"Please to go in, sah—it is the place, upon my honah."

"Ha, ha," the Sikh laughed, "hear him talk of honor. Might as well a blind man—blind from his mother—tell about the flowers and sky, and the color of a girl's eyes. Honor! Why, Babu, all your honor's in your stomach, and with a touch of my sword, here, I could let it out. A pretty sight, your honor would be, eh? It would take a regiment of sweepers to cart it away. How much did he beg from you, *sahib?*"

"I beseech you, sah, do not tell him—do not condescend to lie to him, sah. God knows, I need the money."

"Am I to stand here all night, listening to this chatter?" asked Sesson with well-pretended anger. "Lead me to the *Burra Sahib*."

The Sikh promptly shut the gate in the babu's face, grinned fiercely, and stalked toward the door of the house. This he opened with a swagger.

"In there, *sahib*," and Sesson—and it took nerve to do it—nerve and faith in the man he was visiting—entered what looked like a large box. The Sikh shut the door of this arrangement, and Sesson felt it rising. Then he breathed more freely, and realized that the lack of light had prevented him recognizing an elevator.

The cage rose perhaps twenty feet, and stopped. The door opened automatically, and Sesson stepped into a dark hallway—the elevator door closing behind him. Then, out of a Stygian blackness, appeared a light, and the blandly smiling brother of all the Chinese laundrymen.

"Velly dark, eh? This way, please."

Sesson, not unnaturally, wondered how many more people he would have to pass before reaching his destination. He could understand, he thought, the reason for so many different nationalities, and the many precautions meant concealment—hiding from the police. He wished that he had refused to take the money on the breakwater. But it was too late to wish that now. He followed the Chinaman, wondering what sort of a gang he had fallen in with, and what manner of crime he would be forced to commit before he could escape and inform the police.

The Chinaman knocked on a door, an English voice called "Come in," and Sesson was ushered into an ordinary Anglo-Indian room; with wide, wire-meshed windows opened to the night air, and delightfully cool with its huge punka after the walk through the hot streets.

From a long-sleeve chair, an elderly Englishman rose to meet him—a man who did not look like a crook—and Sesson shook hands with a feeling of relief, while the smiling Chinaman retired, to return almost immediately with ice-cold soda for the pegs.

"You must have done a lot of thinking," emarked the *Burra Sahib*—for this old

man was that personage—as he indicated another chair.

"I have," Sesson grinned.

"And I can pretty well guess what you thought. But, to come to the point at once, how would you like to work for me? I need an Englishman close at hand—one I can trust, and one who has reasons for not being overly in love with the native who apes equality with ourselves. But don't think you are bound to me in any way because of the little matter which has brought you here. All I ask in return for that is that you will say nothing about this experience—and I think you will oblige me."

"I should say I would," Sesson lapsed into an Americanism, the other's magnetic personality gripping him, "and I'll take on the job—it looks too interesting to let go, and I must work, anyway."

"Good. I like a man who can decide quickly. I won't go into details just now, but you'll soon find out that you are mixed up with a big scheme—a plan which, through innumerable paths, has for its object the preservation of British supremacy in India."

Sesson stared, and drank his whisky.

"There may be danger at times. In fact, there is sure to be," went on the *Burra Sahib*.

"That's all right."

"But you will find that your pay will be adequate. Are you married?"

"No, and I haven't a single relative."

"So I heard, but I thought it just as well to make sure."

So, in this manner, did Sesson become a part of the "great plan"—a working cog in the wonderful machine that kept India from restlessly throwing aside the safe-covering of the British flag.

His diffreent adventures would fill many volumes. Under the living sea of human beings he worked, often causing a ripple on its surface that caused the authorities to wonder, and the secret service to become unusually active. He was a part of the many living wires of activity which radiated out from the old man in the room reached by the box-like elevator—one of the many who did the bidding of, and brought in information to, that wonderful, coordinating brain. And to that brain he owed his saving—but for it he would have drifted, a broken piece of human flotsam, on to that beach where flotsam rots and dies.

III

"COOMER ALI is getting ready to make trouble again," the *Burra Sahib* looked tired as he spoke across the breakfast table.

"Who is he?" Sesson was hearing of new characters every day—nearly every one of them an enemy to the British.

"A Mohammedan, the son of a poor dingy *waller*. Perhaps he was born on the Hugli, in the dingy. As a baby, he used to sit and stare at the sun, while his father rowed men to and from the ships at the moorings in his dingy. Later on, he helped a bit, but was too lazy, or idiotic, for real work. Then he began to preach, and it turned out that there was method in his madness. He is not a *hadji*, never been to Mecca, but he wields more influence over the Calcutta Mohammedans than any man in Bengal. And of course it's a bad influence. The fellow isn't over thirty-five. You know the type—all talk and no logic; the sort of stuff people of socialistic tendencies admire, because reason is beyond them. I've kept track of him, of course; and now he's about ready to break out."

"Why not inform the police?"

Sesson's question was natural enough, but the *Burra Sahib* laughed rather bitterly.

"I am trying to train you to take my place, in case I die before the 'big thing' is pulled off. Now, remember, never tell the police anything. When the time comes, I will have to take into my confidence the biggest man I can find, but not the police. Why, if I told them they would only give me a lot of trouble on trumped-up charges because of my interference; and as for their being of any assistance in regard to Ali—except to arrest him when I put him in their power—they would be about as useful as a crowd of bulls in a china shop, all trying at once to put together a broken vase. Give the police a very wide berth."

"I'll remember," promised Sesson, awed at the magnitude of the task which might devolve upon him, and hoping sincerely that his friend and boss would outlive him.

"Now," went on the *Burra Sahib*, "as regards the immediate—perhaps you haven't much faith in the native astrologers; but I have, because I have seen their predictions come true too many times to be explained by mere coincidence. The astrologers predict an earthquake for tomorrow, and they

are in league with Coomer Ali. Consequently, the prediction was made by Coomer Ali, which of course made him a prophet—the multitude believing that he did the predicting.

"Tomorrow is the big festival, as you know, and of course there will be trouble. The police do not believe the earthquake prediction, and, further, they do not see its connection with the festival riots. They expect the usual thing—Mohammedans and Hindus fighting each other—and see no bigger job ahead of them than keeping a sort of order, of preventing the row from going too far. But, if the earthquake comes off, there will be an attempt to start another mutiny.

"I won't trouble you with details just now, because I have the thing in hand, I believe. So we will wait until tomorrow."

They waited: Sesson openly skeptical about the earthquake, the *Burra Sahib* confident.

There were the usual signs of coming trouble. White women were insulted in the native manner—which can not be described—and several indignant men used their revolvers freely. Not that the women were assaulted, or that any native went near them—their method is more pantomimic. There were some arrests, and guards were detailed for the next morning.

Sesson went to bed very pleased at having won the nightly game of chess; he was awakened before it was light by his bed taking a cruise across the floor of his room. He got out, in much the same way he was accustomed to do aboard ship in bad weather, but discovered that the floor did not roll at all decently. It moved more like the back of a horse—an animal of which Sesson stood in awe—and he fell into a corner, making motions like one who is learning to swim with poor success.

From the streets came wild howls, and the roar of falling walls. Through this the fire-alarm bellowed discordantly. Sesson wondered how much of this sort of thing the house he lived in would stand before going to pieces.

But that house had withstood the quakes and circumstance of many years, and although it groaned a little bit, and its sleepy spirit protested in the lethargic way of house-spirits the world over, the quake passed and left it unbroken, with Sesson struggling out of his pajamas.

"The quake has given Coomer Ali his chance," the *Burra Sahib* stood in the doorway five minutes later. "It had been arranged between the leaders that if the quake came as Ali predicted the Hindus and Mohammedans would combine forces—in Calcutta, at any rate. If we fail to stop them, they will combine all over India, and there is not enough force to fight them. That means another mutiny—Cawnpore, Lucknow, and all the rest of it. A year of bloody war.

"Of course, the real leaders of the 'big thing' are opposed to any such rising, but they can not stop it—religious fanaticism will take the people out of control. The big natives who have been getting ready for years to make a real effort to overthrow the British know quite well that Ali's outbreak will fail, but Ali has been able to ignore them—for a time.

"They are mad because a low-caste native of his sort has taken charge; but that does not help us. And the authorities have no idea what this means—they can not see the significance of the earthquake. But Ali predicted it. Ali is, therefore, a prophet—a prophet who has succeeded in doing the impossible: making an alliance between the Hindus and his own lot. And they will follow him to the devil. Well, it's up to us. If my plans work out—as they will—Ali will be squashed forever before dark. But the police are going to have a time, and certain officials are going to worry a whole lot before it's over."

IV

THE quake ceased. For a little while there was calm, then, gradually, the jubilant natives began to give tongue. The priests were fraternizing, and their followers were doing the same. From mouth to mouth went the wonderful news. It was the end—or the beginning. Processions would not be interfered with. Mohammedans would not amuse themselves by defiling Hindu temples, and Hindus would respect the mosques. And Coomer Ali was a great man. He might be the son of a dingy *waller*, but had not Mohammed sprung from humble parents?

Yes, Ali, in the minds of the frenzied people, was another prophet. The city roared, the streets became rivers of men and women, barbarous musical instruments

blared, bells rang, Mohammedans spread their prayer-mats, and prayed, while Hindus looked on—at festival time—without ribald comment. The native millenium had arrived.

But certain forces, other than sweating police, were working against this sudden Napoleon. Very early that morning, Sesson and the enormously fat babu hurried to the branch telegraph office nearest to Ali's headquarters. It was inhabited by another stout native gentleman, who was very proud of his position, and very punctilious regarding rules. Awakened from his slumbers, he informed the Englishman and the fat babu that he would send no messages before eight o'clock—at which time the office opened.

If the babu's wife were dead, he could go to the main office, where messages might be sent at any hour. He was in sole charge of this place, and he was responsible. He had no clerk, and the Superintendent *Sahib* only came once a week. He shouted all this impolitely through the locked door. At eight o'clock he would open the window and send the message, if there was money to pay for it. But the door he would not open until Saturday, when the *sahib* came. This was Tuesday. They could come to the window at eight o'clock, but they must go away from the door.

But, yes, for five rupees he would take the message—five rupees in addition to the toll—and send it at eight o'clock. Slip the money and the message under the door. It was an accommodation.

The very fat babu looked at Sesson and grinned with understanding. He, too, had been a telegraph clerk—had, indeed, been in charge of that same office. Then he beckoned a small boy who had followed them at a distance, and gave him two annas and a message. Then the fat babu and Sesson waited, while the dawn broke clearly, and the babu in the office, despairing of five rupees, returned to his snoring.

About twenty minutes later arrived a Being—the word "Being," because it is metaphysical, all embracing, and may mean anything, quite accurately describes this person, who, beginning his depredations as a "missionary *waller*"—his extreme ugliness marking him as the one lamb whose saying would bring the greatest glory—had risen, step by step—said steps punctuated by a sojourn in nearly every jail in India—until the *Burra Sahib* had organized his peculiar talents, and bought his loyalty with what to the Being was an enormous salary.

The Being grinned through his slit mouth—one eye and both ears were missing—and approached the waiting two. The fat babu merely pointed to the door, and the Being spat with contempt.

"*Colo*," assisted the babu.

"*Um junta*," the Being sneered, and produced a sort of forceps made of thick wire.

Without a sound, he opened the door of the office, and the three men slipped inside—closing the door again without waking the official operator, until the Being began to throttle him with the skill of a genius in that line.

It was Sesson who produced the gag, feeling thankful there was no light, and who, with sailor-like ability, made it impossible for the frenzied official to utter any complaint; and it was Sesson—more humane than his companions—who made him fairly comfortable in a cupboard. Then the Being—apparently disappointed at not being allowed the delight of murder—melted with the last shades of night; Sesson went about another duty, and the stout babu composed himself to wait for eight o'clock, when he would open the office, and work without drawing salary from the Government.

And now the streets were boiling. Never in the history of the city had there been such a condition—the result of a prophecy fulfilled. The native mind was at fever heat.

A long-suffering police force, as yet unaware of Coomer Ali and his coup, had posted itself to keep the river of humanity from doing harm, while hastily sworn-in civilians did their best to guard fallen buildings from would-be looters. Arriving in blasphemous companies, the regiment from the fort promised to make the "heathens" pay for its exposure to the sun.

To the blasé residents of Calcutta, it was the same old thing—the religious squabble they had known always. They did not dream that the rival religions had joined forces; but when this fact was forced upon their attention a shiver that spread all over the country forced them to the recognition of the serious situation, and a number of very eminent men lost their heads completely.

But for the unseen *Burra Sahib* that Calcutta trouble would, as he had said, have spread, and broken perhaps into war. How he squashed it will seem absurdly simple to the uninitiated, but to those having understanding that simplicity will shine as the simplicity of genius. Besides, lacking an overwhelming force, his method was the only one which could have possibly succeeded.

V

PRECISELY at eight, the fat babu opened the window of the branch telegraph office. He did this—although he was without an audience—with a superciliousness that was meant to disguise the pride he felt at being picked out for such a responsible, and he hoped lucrative, position at such a time. The *Burra Sahib* had given him explicit directions, and he had given them in a manner which clearly implied that there was no other man whom he could trust as he could trust the fat babu—a tactful manner which had won him much loyalty at little cost.

It was three minutes past eight when several dozen excited and self-important natives—Mohammedan and Hindus mixed—crowded around the window, bearing in their midst a telegram to no less a person than the Sultan of Turkey.

How much would it cost? For, native-like, they were prepared to bargain to the final anna, even though they knew the tolls were fixed.

Very gravely, and with a dignified leisure that befitted his exalted station, the fat babu took the telegram and began to read it. A voice from the crowd protested at this violation of the privacy of the message, while others explained to this *"jungli waller"* what they knew about telegrams, and the need of the sending-clerk reading them.

During this interlude, the babu stared with contempt, and when the *jungli waller* was apparently convinced he began a lecture upon their collective ignorance, the poor spelling of the message—written, of course, in English, since Morse did not lend itself to Urdu, or other native writing—and the great favor he was doing them by sending it at all. His discourse was interrupted by the vigorous sound of large feet, violently hammered against protesting boards.

"My dog," he explained, waddling to the cupboard where the rightful clerk was confined. Partially opening the door, he inserted a foot and kicked until the occupant coughed in a very undoglike tone, with a broken rib. Then, without a word, he shut the door, and returned to the window.

"Your dog does not bark, Babuji," suggested a wag.

"No," replied the babu courteously, "his voice is very like yours," a sample of native wit that roused the crowd to delighted crowing.

"If I send this, it will cost me my position," he lied—knowing very well that if he relayed it to the main office—which he had no intention of doing—it would go no farther.

The crowd consulted, and offered financial balm for the loss of his job.

"Come again," he suggested, in the vernacular.

They compromised at five rupees, their excited state seemingly blinding them to the small value the babu set on his job—the babu, however, aware that five rupees was the limit they would stand for. But the telegram would cost forty-three rupees, seven annas—the rightful toll to Constantinople for the words 'Send halp, Coomer Ali'—which was haggled over for fully ten minutes, and finally paid.

"When will the answer come, Babu?" asked the leader with the purse.

"How can I tell? Perhaps your friend, the Sultan, may be drunk," he drawled, raising a howl at his insult to the leader of the faithful, who is not supposed to get drunk—a howl he stilled by closing the window in their faces; keeping it closed until he heard them go away. Then he opened it again, beckoned the same small boy messenger, gave him an envelope containing the message, and bade him hurry.

The boy hurried until he met the old native who had guided Sesson on the night of his arrival. To the old native he gave the envelope, and the old native shuffled along until he could give it to another, who, in turn, gave it to the Sikh gatekeeper, who transmitted it to the smiling Chinaman, who gave it to the *Burra Sahib*.

In reverse manner, came another envelope, which, when it reached the fat babu, was found to contain a reply from the Sultan of Turkey—a reply which caused the stout one to grin broadly, chiefly

because the *Burra Sahib* had thoughtfully sent it "collect," which meant another hundred and ninety rupees, ten annas—it was a fairly long reply on a cable blank—for the babu's pocket—five rupees plus forty-three, plus one hundred and ninety, plus seven annas, plus ten annas; an excellent morning's salary. No wonder the babu was happy, when we remember the large family he supported.

And he did not have to wait long for the money, although the leader of the crowd sweated, and cursed the penurious Sultan under his breath. Yet, if the reply had not arrived collect, its genuinness might have been doubted. For of such is the mind of the native!

The wonderful reply, sealed carefully in its envelope, and unread by the receiver because it was addressed to Coomer Ali—a great man—was carried away in triumph, for it was thought to mean the downfall of the British—something which not a one of them cared about, and which on any other day but this they would rather not have happen. But just how the Sultan was going to accomplish the debacle was a point far too abstract for their minds to trouble about.

Meanwhile, the passing hours had seen the *Burra Sahib* busy in other directions, while the authorities were beginning to realize that this day's riot was no ordinary religious excitement; but when one astute policeman reported that the two religions were allied, his chief threatened to discharge him for drunkenness. It was only when a rich civilian damned the said chief to his scandalized eyes, that the extraordinary alliance was accepted as fact, and, like the sudden understanding of a puzzle-picture, it became patent that the Tommies and police were not needed to protect one kind of native against another, but were required to protect Calcutta itself from ceasing to be a city ruled by the British.

A harried military magnate—all this, be it remembered, was before the Boer War began to demand a sort of efficiency from army officers—decided to put the burden of the salt upon a Sikh regiment, stationed at Ballygunge, and hastily ordered it to Calcutta by telegraph. And while Calcutta waited for what might happen, and the Sikhs to arrive by train, it began to dawn on a certain few that India was somewhat ill-prepared to withstand a cohesive native uprising.

Just upon that hour, a stout babu, feeling that he done a good day's work, beckoned the ever-present small boy messenger, and vacated the office—after bidding the boy open the cupboard, and run away before the animal inside could bite him. Thus it came to pass that a blubbering telegraph-operator called his main office, and begged for a regiment to protect him from the further assaults of the five or six thousand ruffians whom he had with difficulty, but so far successfully, withstood since the hours of early morning.

Later he called again with the plaintive but logical request that, since no guard had arrived, and he had, therefore, been compelled to win the battle unaided, he be awarded the Victoria Cross. And lest this be taken for an exaggerated statement, let it be told that it is an actual matter of record.

SHOT in and out, as it were, and tangled with the hours and minutes of the moving shuttle of time weaving the shroud of this passing day, was a motley crowd which appeared to manifest a silent devotion to some unrevealed cause, but which took no interest at all in the noisy wanderings of their fellowmen and natives. This band worked under the leadership of a curious-looking creature which, upon careless analysis, might have been taken for a dissipated *topas*—or native sweeper of dirty places.

A more careful, but not necessarily microscopic examination, would have shown that this unpleasant specimen answered, when properly addressed, to the name of Sesson, a man of mediocre histrionic ability, and of no ability at all with regard to the art of disguise. No, that is not fair, because Sesson disguised as a low native was so completely camouflaged that he looked like nothing else in the world—that is, nothing like unto him had ever been seen in the memory of man.

Yet, trained to it from his youth, he succeeded in getting an enormous amount of work out of animals to whom work was a mortal enemy.

An intimate of this Sesson, if by chance he had pierced the disguise, would have been more than surprized. For this ex-ship's officer, never a religious man, drove and hurried his gang with great regularity toward certain houses of prayer, certain

Hindu temples and other Mohammedan mosques. It is regretable, however, that prayer did not seem to be his object. In fact, his devoted followers were not allowed time for prayer—which lack, however, they did their best to remedy by an almost continuous string of low-voiced curses.

Instead of behaving like any religious body, they were apparently doing their utmost to imitate a swarm of ants. Each man carried some little thing from a certain place nominally under the control of the Fertilization Department of Bengal. After carrying their little things for a certain distance, they deposited them in certain places—with Sesson watching carefully that no man dropped his load by the wayside.

After dropping these little bundles in the places designated, each man hurriedly returned to where he had garnered, and appropriated to himself another package of similar content. To be exact, the—whatever it was—was carried in baskets: baskets as heavily disguised as was Sesson. And such a gang, properly mastered, will, if given time, divert a considerable quantity of—whatever it was—from its ordained end.

The noise had reached its apex, and it but needed the word of Coomer Ali to break into worse than noise—to become a horde seeking lust and loot. And Coomer Ali only waited for what he thought the proper moment to read to the multitude the endorsement of the Sultan of Turkey, as yet unread, as yet in the envelope guarded by the faithful chief of staff. At three o'clock, then, Hindu and Mohammedans were brothers-in-arms, sweating hatred of the British. At three-ten, they were something else.

It has been stated that Coomer Ali was illiterate—he could neither read nor write—few prophets can. In fact, the function of every prophet is not to read or write, and never to think, whether the prophet be religious or political, but to talk, and to talk loudly and vastly. In short, his job is to make a noise. And Coomer Ali, whose father was a dingy *waller*, was a past master at making a noise.

He was making a noise—a noise sufficiently loud to carry to the edge of a crowd of nearly forty thousand people—a crowd so thick that the police could not pierce it to arrest the noise-maker—when it occurred to him that it was the psychological moment to have his chief of staff read the reply from the Sultan of Turkey. So he suddenly stopped making a noise, and raised his hand for silence—rather a waste of energy, because he was doing all the talking.

He opened his mouth once more, to mention that the Sultan was with them, and would send them aid—was at that moment sending aid. And to prove it, the telegram would be read to the faithful—Hindu and Mohammedan alike.

When one considers that this leader of native opinion had kept the telegram unopened for hours, had shown his efficiency by taking everything for granted, because his religious belief told him to, one is more than ever convinced that the native of India is quite ready to govern himself!

A tremendous uproar had greeted the announcement, an uproar which stilled magically when the chief of staff stood up on a raised place, with the envelope in his hand. Opening it, he was surprized to find that it was not written in English, but in a language that every one in the crowd understood. In this he saw at once a marvelous demonstration of the Sultan's power—overriding the rules of the British Government, which had hitherto only allowed English to be the language of telegrams.

He had to speak, and he did it dramatically, his voice trembling.

"Behold this wonder, my brothers. Behold the power of Coomer Ali, to whom the great Sultan makes swift reply; and behold the power of that Sultan, which compels the English to allow him to speak in our own tongue to us by the telegram."

He paused, while Coomer Ali swelled toad-like. There was a slight commotion on the outskirts of the crowd. Men were telling one another some fateful news, and agitation became visible. Others, nearer the speaker, shouted to him to read the telegram, and Ali added his voice to the request.

The chief of staff, flustered, obeyed hurriedly. A cleverer man would have substituted, but this native, expecting a sort of parable, and never the clear word, read the telegram, without realizing any of its meaning until he had finished.

He shouted—

"Trust not the dog, who is even now defiling your temples."

What did it mean? Who was the dog? Was it Coomer Ali, or the Mohammedans in general? To the Hindus either answer was sufficient—and there were men running with the true tale of the defilement of all the temples, Hindus' and Mohammedans' alike.

The runners—doing the last of their job under the eye of Sesson—were all through the crowd before it understood, before it could puzzle out the meaning of that awful message. For a moment, the Mohammedans grinned, believing that only the temples had been defiled; but even to their slow minds penetrated that reference to the dog that could not be trusted. The word means so much more than it does in English, when applied to a human.

But why elaborate on the psychology of that crowd. It was betrayed whichever way it looked, and its betrayers were right at hand. There was only one thought—revenge. Mohammedan struck at Hindu, Hindu at Mohammedan, and the stink of their desecrated places of worship called them to fight to the bitter end. So, with every man turning on his neighbor, only a few master spirits thought of the cause of it all. And these went to interview Coomer Ali, once, for a short time, a prophet, but now . . . .

"WELL," remarked the police magistrate, "with so many fighting there is no sense jailing this one—let him go."

The prisoner—his few torn rags clinging to him miraculously—did not want to go. He was a most unusual prisoner—he begged to be allowed to remain in jail.

"Protector of the poor," he explained pathetically, "I am a good man, and the bad men do not love me. They even beat me."

"He seems to be telling the truth—strange though that is," the magistrate grinned as he regarded the unfortunate prophet. "Well, perhaps he can be used as a *topas*." He spoke sternly to Ali. "If we let you stay here for a month, will you work as a sweeper—without pay?"

As a hungry trout after a fly, Coomer Ali accepted the offer. A moment later he became thoughtful.

"But, oh Protector of the poor, the job of a sweeper—which I am glad to take—is one without honor."

The magistrate smiled.

"But, as for that, you must remember that you are a prophet."

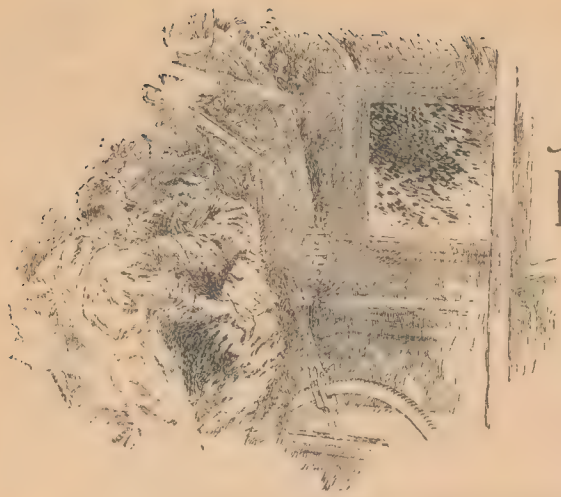
Yet that magistrate's humor might have tasted better had he known how near Coomer Ali had come to disproving the old saying.

NORTHERN LIGHTS

by **ETHEL WATTS MUMFORD**

THE mighty fine, those Northairn Light—
She mak' no noise, she shine so bright.
I watch her play, so hard—so cold—
Then soft, so gentle, dat her fold
Seem lak *La Vierge*, she wave her han',
An' shake her long cloak on de lan';
Or lak some angel's makanaw,
All fine, lak what yo' navair saw!

She mighty fine, those Northairn Light,
Lak fire on de snow at night.
The Boreal, she pretty strange—
So queek she come, so queek she change;
One place she show, then here, then there,
An' pret' soon she everywhere.
She joomp so alaround, you bleenk—
Jus' lak the way my Jeanne, she theenk!



JACKSON'S LAST RUN

by Charles Wesley Sanders

Author of "The Drop of Blood," "The Odds Against," etc.

JACKSON sat with his hand on the throttle of the big engine. Back of the engine there was a string of Pullman sleepers. This was one of the finest, fastest trains in the world. Jackson had been its engineer for ten years.

He had worked for the railroad for thirty-five years, beginning as a call-boy. He was now fifty. He had been a frugal man and he had enough property and money to enable him to retire. Long ago he had given his word to his wife that when he reached the half-century mark he would retire. He was prepared to keep his word. This was to be his last run.

Mrs. Jackson had been a country girl when he had married her. She had never lost her love for things rural. Always, in the midst of the plenty which had come to her and to Jackson, her heart had turned fondly to the little farm on which she and her husband were to live when he had pulled his throttle for the last time.

Now the farm was bought and paid for. A snug bungalow stood in the corner of one of the fields where two roads intersected. There was a row of big maples along the main road and beyond them was Lake Erie. Back of the house there was a barn and a chicken house, where later there would be a couple of cows and a hundred chickens.

At first Jackson had not been very enthusiastic about the farm. He had not been very enthusiastic about quitting the road. He was only fifty. He could run his engine for a score of years more. But he had yielded to his wife and after the bungalow had been built he had begun to anticipate the repose and the peace which would be his and hers. For a week he had been more impatient for the final day to come than she had been.

He had seen, with satisfaction, that Mrs. Jackson had been very happy in the prospect. She was a slender, bright-eyed woman, her age showing only in her abundant white hair. Jackson had told her many times in the Summer just passed that she was almost a girl again.

"When I know that you will never have to face the dangers of the road, I'll be a girl," she had told him.

"The dangers of the road?" Jackson had wondered. "Why, they've never been anything to me. I've never had a wreck. I've never been reprimanded, even. My record is as clear as the sun. I s'pose I've been lucky. I didn't know, my dear, that you thought anything about the dangers. You didn't say anything."

"Would I say anything?" Mrs. Jackson had asked. "Would I let you go out on your run, thinking I was worrying? Have I ever been that kind of wife?"

"No, you haven't," Jackson had said. "You've been a great help to me."

And before he had left home this night he had said:

"I'm glad this is my last run. It never occurred to me that every time I went out you might be wondering if they wouldn't

bring me home on a shutter. That must be terrible for a woman. And you've been plucky enough to say nothing."

Mrs. Jackson had been standing by the window. She turned about now and faced her husband. He saw that her face was wan and that there was a wistful look in her eyes.

"I don't want to undo everything I've done in the past," she whispered, "but—but— Well, you remember Lem Dodge—poor old Lem Dodge?"

Jackson remembered Lem Dodge very well. Lem had been past the retirement age when he had been forced to give up his engine. A traveling engineer had boarded his engine one night and had broken the news to him. Lem had pleaded for just one more trip over the road. His plea had been granted—and they had brought him home dead, his life crushed out in the debris of his engine after a head-on collision. Last runs were looked upon with disfavor or dread, according to the nerves of those concerned.

"Oh, I'll be all right," he told his wife. "I'll be extra careful tonight."

"But there is a storm brewing," his wife said. "It's snowing already and the sky is heavy. I called the dispatchers' office before you got up and they said the weather-report showed a bad storm all along the division."

She walked across the room to Jackson and leaned against him. He put his arms across her shoulders.

"It would be terrible if anything should happen to you tonight, just when the life I have dreamed of for years is ready to begin for us," she said.

Jackson had cheered her as well as he could, but he had had to leave her almost immediately and some of her sad misgivings went with him.

The weather-report which she had quoted had not erred about the storm. There was snow generally along the division and in places a blizzard had set in. Snow-plows were already at work, keeping the track clear.

AS JACKSON sat now with his hand on the throttle, he railed inwardly against the storm. Why couldn't it have held off for one more day? If tonight had been tomorrow night he would have been safe in front of an open fire in the bungalow. As it was he faced a growing storm, a condition which is always perilous for railroad men.

But there was no way out. He had to take his train over to the other divisional terminal. He could only hope that the ill-luck of last runs would not be his.

"She's going to be a bad one," Toole, his fireman, said, as they were ready to pull out. "I'll bet we won't be able to see a thing."

Jackson, from his box, looked down at the fireman. Jackson's retirement would mean an engine of his own for Toole. He was at the top of the list. After tonight he would sit on the right-hand side of a freight-engine.

Toole had been firing for Jackson for a long time. He was a capable man, though a little too eager, a little nervous perhaps. Jackson had seen him set his teeth sometimes when poor reckoning on some one's part might have caused a mishap. But he had never actually shown fear.

They pulled out of the station, the shining Pullmans slipping smoothly after them. Jackson had a momentary sense of security. He had pulled out in just this way many, many times. Nothing had ever happened. Surely nothing would happen tonight.

But, clear of the train-shed, he saw that in all his experience he had never faced a storm like this. It was not that its violence was appalling. The wind was blowing steadily from the northwest but without sufficient velocity to impede the train. The snow was what Jackson dreaded. The wind was choked with it and it was so wet and heavy that it dropped out of the wind like so many pellets of lead.

They had not gone a mile before the windows were caked over. Jackson rubbed the clinging snow away but even then he could see nothing. His engine was shut in by thousands of driving white flakes.

Jackson knew his danger only too well. Ahead of him there was a slower passenger-train. Fifty miles to the east it went in on a siding to let this limited pass. Behind Jackson there was another section of his own train. Automatic block-signals kept Jackson a certain distance behind the first train and kept the second train a certain distance behind him. There was no danger—when those signals could be seen.

Jackson did not know whether they could be seen tonight or not. He sat on his seat, waiting to pass the first station. The snow was thickening. It constantly formed a curtain on the window-pane. As Jackson wiped it away he peered in vain for a light. He saw none.

He looked at his watch presently. He should be nearing that first station. He wiped the pane and peered out anxiously again. The snow obscured everything. No light or building showed.

When he realized that he had passed the first station without seeing its lights, his heart suddenly sank. For the first time in his railroad career he felt fear. His wife's wan face, wistful eyes, rose before him.

He shook himself and his lips tightened. Whatever happened, he must not lose his courage. Back in those Pullmans men and women and even children were going to bed with unconscious faith that nothing could happen to them. Their lives were in his care, though they doubtless did not give him a thought. If he permitted his mind to become confused through fear, he would violate their faith in him, even though nothing happened.

He sat with his right hand on the throttle, his eyes on the air-brake. He was ready to shut off the steam and put on the emergency air in an instant.

After a moment he looked up again. His watch showed that the speeding train would soon pass another station. Because of his inability to see the signals he could not tell exactly the time he was making. If he could not see the signals, the engineers on the other trains could not. Too fast or too slow on the part of any of them would mean disaster.

His watch now indicated the time of his train at the second station. He cleared the pane and strained his eyes. But there was nothing discernible through the snow.

This station was on the left of the tracks. Jackson's train was running on the eastbound high-speed track. There was another track between the high-speed and the station, on the fireman's side.

Jackson stepped down from his seat and crossed to the other side of the cab. He climbed up to the fireman's box, putting his hand on the fireman's arm as he did so. The fireman turned to look at him. At first, in his anxiety to see the signal-lights, Jackson did not realize that Toole was staring at him. When he did not see the lights, he looked at Toole. He had been about to make a worried comment, a comment which would have shown Toole that there was danger for both of them and for the train.

But what he saw in Toole's eyes checked the words that rose to his lips. Stark fear was ruling Toole, he perceived. Toole's eagerness, his nervousness, had culminated in a moment which was robbing him of his courage.

"Can't see much, can we?" Jackson asked. "But I guess it'll clear up before long."

Before he turned away, he pursed his lips and began to whistle. But when he climbed to his own seat, he had to look back at Toole. Toole was staring across the cab at him, trying to determine whether his nonchalance was genuine.

Jackson cleared the window-pane again. But still there was nothing to be seen. His eyes could not penetrate the snow, which was now like a white wall, a wall which seemed to fall away from the engine but was ever there.

Jackson put his hand on the throttle, The hand was unsteady. The physical sign of fear shocked him into a realization that he was at last fully afraid.

He tried to deny that to himself but he did not succeed. He thought of everything then that he should not have thought of. He thought of his wife as she had looked when she had voiced her premonition. He thought of Lem Dodge, dead on his last run. He thought of the bungalow, waiting for him and his wife to come to its peace and security. He could see his wife there alone, weeping for him.

And then he thought of the passengers back there in the Pullmans. For the first time in his life, he was failing them. They were already in peril. By considering his own danger he was adding to that peril. He closed his eyes for a moment and there on his seat fought out his fight. He cleared his mind of tormenting fancies. He brought his thoughts steadily to bear on the task at hand—the safe piloting of his engine, if that were possible.

When he opened his eyes a coolness of body and a clarity of mind had come to him. He was the resourceful man he had always been. If this was to be his last run, in a fatal sense, so it should be. But whatever

happened, he would do his best for the passengers.

He opened the window and put out his head as far as he dared. The snow beat into his face and the wind sang in his ears. But he could see no light. The next station was a mill town and usually the sky was filled with a copper-colored glow from the furnaces. But there was no glow tonight. There was no suggestion of color in the blank whiteness all about him.

He closed the window and looked at his watch. In five minutes the train was due at the mill town. The train which was preceding the limited was supposed to go in to clear there. The run of the limited for fifty miles beyond the town was the fastest of the schedule.

Jackson's impulse was to slacken his own speed. But he dared not do that. Somewhere in his rear the second section of his train was tearing along behind him. How close it was he could not tell. All he could do was to go on.

Toole stepped down and shoveled coal into the fire-box. In the glow Jackson could see Toole's face clearly. It was covered with sweat and the forehead was black where Toole had run his hand across it. Toole's hands shook.

Jackson felt a little contempt for Toole then. It was one thing to be afraid. It was another thing to conquer fear. Jackson thought Toole ought to have himself in hand by now. He wondered if Toole had made any effort to command himself.

Toole climbed back to his seat without looking at Jackson. He cleared the window-pane and pressed his face against it when he had closed the window. Jackson had kept his own window open and the snow was whirling in on him. His eyes scanned the sky for signs of the mill lights. Then of a sudden there was a jar, a scarcely perceptible slowing up. The engine had struck something but had tossed it aside and sped on again.

BUT to Toole's overwrought nerves the slight impact had been the precursor of the crash of doom. With a scream he sprang from his seat. But Jackson had been watching him. He had seen men jump under those circumstances before. He intercepted Toole before Toole could reach the gangway. He put his hands on Toole's chest and pushed him back.

"It's all right," he cried. "Get back on your seat. We hit a cow or something. It didn't hurt us. You're scared, Toole."

Toole suddenly relaxed and fell back against his seat. He stood there a moment with closed eyes, while Jackson returned to his own seat. Then Toole climbed up. Only half a minute had passed. Between his attempts to find a light somewhere along the track, Jackson cast glances at Toole.

For perhaps ten seconds Toole sat shivering on his seat. Jackson saw his lips moving. He knew that Toole was condemning himself in inaudible words. For those ten seconds Toole was very pale. His hands gripped the cushion of the seat. Then slowly his color came back. His hands loosed their hold. He turned toward Jackson and looked at him sheepishly.

Jackson laughed across the cab at him. He had to reassure Toole. He had no time to watch a frightened fireman. And in reassuring Toole he reassured himself. The last vestige of his own fear vanished.

Toole slipped from his seat and crossed the cab.

"I'm all right now," he called up to Jackson. "Lost my nerve for a minute. You needn't bother about me any more. I'll be right on the job."

Jackson scarcely heard the last sentence. He had been staring out of the window.

"I think there's the lights of the mills," he said. "See that rosy tint through the snow. Yep, it's growing— Well!"

The exclamation was called forth by the flashing by of the block-lights just west of the station. Then they swept past the station itself. They could see the lighted windows plainly. In a moment the train which had preceded them came into view, lying on the siding. They passed the cars and came to the panting engine. They exchanged signals and the limited dashed on into the night.

"I s'pose we'll have some more of it," Jackson called down to Toole. "But it won't be so bad. We know we're right on time and there's nothing ahead of us."

When they had passed the other train, Toole had continued to stare through Jackson's window. Now he began to laugh, in a strange, half-hysterical way.

"Why, the snow's letting up," he cried. "You can see enough now to know where you are."

Jackson looked out of the window and saw

that that was true. There was still some snow, probably would be some all night, but it was not so thick as to obscure the lights.

Toole went back to his seat and Jackson settled down to the routine of his last trip. He had a sense of security now. If anything had been going to happen to him, it would have happened back there when the storm was at its worst.

He was ashamed of that touch of fear he had had, but he was very grateful that Toole had not known that he had been afraid. Toole had been too nervous to notice. It was a blot on Jackson's escutcheon but it was a blot which no man would ever see.

He was glad that he would always be able to hide it. While he had many friends, there were others on the road who did not like him. Some were envious, some jealous, some did not like him because he was not their kind of man. These would be glad of a bit of gossip which would reflect on Jackson, which would somehow dim a reputation as nearly perfect as a reputation can be. When this last trip was done, Jackson now felt sure that he would go forth to his ease, with that reputation unblemished, so far as men would know.

As they stepped down from the cab at the end of the run, he even felt a kind of righteousness because he had conquered his fear. Toole had let his fear rule him till Jackson had come to his aid. Toole hadn't been able to summon back his courage alone.

With that in his mind he turned to Toole. He had half-expected the fireman to slink away. But Toole was at his elbow.

"There's something I want to tell you," Toole said, his face pale again. "It came to me in the last five miles. You know how scared I was. Well, it was the first time. I don't know— Well, I guess I've been thinking too much about taking out a run of my own. I haven't been sleeping very well. It all piled up on me while we were pounding through that darned snow.

"But I guess I'm not fit to run an engine. I'm only fit to fire with a good, steady man over on the other side to watch me. If I had been running that engine tonight, I don't know what I would have done. I might have gone all to pieces. So I just wanted to tell you that I'm going to stick to the left-hand side of the cab. I'll tell them I don't want that run. I haven't got the nerve or the nerves, I guess. To run an engine a man has got to keep cool the way you did out there in that storm. I'm telling you this because you might feel that it was your duty to report me. You can see that I'm not fit to run an engine."

Jackson saw what he ought to do, but he had a retarding thought. If he told Toole what his honest heart urged him to tell, those who did not like him might weave a tissue of lies about him. He did not know whether Toole would hold his tongue. He was a young man. And Jackson was too proud to bind Toole to secrecy.

"Oh, forget it, Toole," he said lamely. "That may not happen to you again. I guess—I think— Oh, I know you can make good all right."

A look of disappointment dawned in Toole's eyes. He drooped a little in an abandonment of some hope he had seemed to have. He turned away. Jackson, debating with himself, let him go ten feet.

"Toole," he then said sharply.

Toole turned and retraced his steps.

"I guess I'm a coward all the way," Jackson said. "I'm afraid now, just as I was afraid in the cab. But I'm afraid of lying tongues, and I don't know any worse fear than that. I was just as scared as you were but you didn't notice it. You were too busy with your own scare. I did'nt get my nerve back till just before you did."

He held out his hand and Toole gripped it.

"We are all liable to get it once in a while," Jackson went on. "It'll probably never hit you again. If it does, take it by the neck and choke it to death. Then you'll be all right. You go on and take your freight run. You'd be a chump to throw away your chance because you lost your nerve for a few minutes."

Toole grinned.

"I thought mebbe you'd tell me that," he said dryly. "I hoped you would anyhow. You see, I didn't begin to lose my nerve till you began to lose yours. As soon as I saw you had got yours back I got mine. What bothered me was that you had been running an engine for a good many years and that was your first time. My first time came before I ever sat up on the right-hand side. It didn't seem to me that I ought to take an engine when I couldn't start clean."

"You haven't started yet," Jackson said. "When you do, this night will be a help to you. All you've got to do is to say 'Never again.'"

"Never again!" said Toole fervently.

TOO MUCH CAUTION

by Romaine H. Lowdermilk

OLD "Cautious Jeff" Cottin is fifty years old. He has not always been cautious. Neither has he always been Jeff Cottin. And he has not always been old, either. Twenty-five years ago he was young—young, sure and vain. Yet one single thoughtless moment, one careless little flip of his forefinger, brought a quarter of a century of disaster down on his head.

That brief moment of carelessness had left Colonel Bowler lying in an awkward heap, down behind his high cashier counter, and a badly scared and repentant bandit-lad fleeing in one direction and Cautious Jeff—who was then the promising young Thomas Jefferson Carter—in a similar fix fleeing in another.

In his cabin nestling on the mountainside high in the Sierra Madres just across the gulch from the great Copper Chief Mine old Cautious Jeff Cottin knelt stiffly before his fireplace and cautiously turned a flapjack. Flapjacks, miner's style, for supper. Cautious Jeff lifted the finished product—a thick, durable flapjack—from the griddle with a gnarled thumb and forefinger and laid it down deftly on a pile of its fellows, poured another bait of batter on to the griddle and squatted patiently, his lips moving slightly in mumbled replies to his thoughts.

Jeff didn't talk much to other people; so he made up for it by talking to himself. That's a good way to be cautious, anyhow. And Jeff must be cautious; always cautious. One great piece of carelessness in his life had been enough, thereafter and thenceforth he had become cautious, weighing all matters pro and con before taking action. Although only fifty years had dusted their ashes down on his fading hair Jeff was old—old at fifty.

Near his cabin a cautiously closed and locked door guarded the portal of Jeff's copper mine. This mine was apparently Jeff's great expectation as he offered it for sale at one hundred thousand dollars, cash down, sight unseen! Jeff was an independent soul for at the bottom of the crooked trail leading across to the Copper Chief Mine—owned by the great Copper Chief Mining Company—lay Jeff's placer-diggings. Gold, pure placer-gold, was down there. Why, on good days old Jeff sometimes panned out as much as a dollar and a half.

OVER in the office of the Copper Chief three men were engaged in a hushed and apparently important discussion occasioned by the purchase of a single fifty-cent padlock, by one Cautious Jeff Cottin. Wayland Bruce, the superintendent, was saying:

"Yes, old Jeff evidently lost confidence in the rusty old-style lock he has been using for the past fifteen years and he came into the store and bought a new one. I sent for you at once, Mr. McLain."

"Holding out one of the keys on him, eh?"

"Not exactly, but it amounts to the same thing. You see, with each box of these locks we sell from the store we have a master-key. I have it here."

"I see," replied Angus McLain soberly. "But I don't really relish the idea. To pick the old man's lock doesn't appeal to me."

"Mr. McLain," Bruce interrupted, "it is your prerogative as president of the Copper Chief Mining Company to investigate Cautious Jeff's drift."

"You propose that I undertake it, then?" inquired McLain.

"It's the chance you've waited ten years for. Pardon me, Mr. McLain, but it seems your only chance."

"Yes, I know it," sighed McLain. "But—isn't there any other way? Haven't either of you—" turning to the mining engineer who had accompanied him—"ever thought of anything?"

"We have, and we've tried without success, every plan outside assassination that seemed anything like feasible, Mr. McLain. Ever since your company took over these workings we've been trying to get a look into old Jeff's tunnel."

"Ever tried buying it?"

"Many a time. They're queer that way—some of these old prospectors. Jeff says the drift is one hundred feet long and he's got to have one thousand dollars a foot for it, cash down, before he'll even let a prospective buyer look inside, much less go in. It's a long chance."

"But," insisted the president, "did you make it perfectly clear to him that we will be only too glad to pay him the full price whenever investigation proves that he really has the ore?"

"Again and again. But he insists on 'sight unseen' for one hundred thousand dollars—if you get his mine."

President McLain shook his head sadly.

"I hate to play a trick on the old boy, but I suppose we'll have to. We can't afford to pay him that price without inspecting the property."

The three sat silent in the dusk. Through the partition they could see that the lights were on in the long retail salesroom. Miners, with their wives and children, strolled about, more to gossip than to buy. The company always welcomed their miners in the store. The evening mail, brought by the dumpy little narrow gage train by which McLain had arrived, was being distributed. Many lounged near the wicket awaiting their turn.

"There's your man now," Wayland Bruce informed McLain quietly.

The three men in the dark office saw the great front door swing inward a trifle while the brim of a wide, black hat slowly protruded past the edge, the vague outline of its wearer showing darkly between the long glass panel and the blackness of the cold night outside.

"That's Cautious Jeff," continued the superintendent. "He never enters a room suddenly. He's cautious, all right."

"What's the matter? Is he a little bit cracked?"

"Not by a whole lot. On the dodge from something, I guess."

"Do you know where he came from?"

"He claims he used to mine coal down in Virginia; talks like a Southerner, too. He settled in here before we did much development work and since then he has been living across at his cabin guarding his own mine. He's an interesting codger, Jeff is."

To the interested trio in the superintendent's office Cautious Jeff appeared simply a little old man clothed in faded blue overalls and a jumper of the same material, both many sizes too large even after evident repeated washings. A man small in stature, yet the stamp of proven power was on his rugged features, firm and grim even in repose, but softened by the light of genuine human kindness that showed in his gentle gray eyes.

His hair, white under the wide black sombrero showed close-clipped and curling. Home-made denim mittens were on his hands. His whole garb and countenance were at utmost variance with the compact automatic pistol that sagged in its polished leather holster at his hip.

"Why, no wonder the boys all like him," murmured McLain, turning to the others. "He's just a nice, clean old man—typical Southerner. I like him myself."

"So do I," confessed Bruce decisively. "And I only hope his claim proves to be as good as he says it is."

"I'd believe it if he ever told me it was good."

"That's the trouble," growled Bruce. "He'll never say positively that it is good. He doesn't seem to know, himself. He's doubtful. All he ever says is, 'She's for sale,

sight unseen, one hundred thousand dollars,' and tells you to look at the ore on his dump, which makes a good showing in diorite gangue. But whether it comes from a vein or just a pocket is impossible to tell. The Summer floods have scattered the dump pretty badly, you know."

At the mail wicket Cautious Jeff was receiving his mail, a single, wrapped pamphlet. That was all.

"That's about all most of these old-timers get—or expect," laughed Bruce softly. "But it's real mail to them."

Old Jeff had taken the thing eagerly, examined the address closely; then, slipping it carefully in his pocket, he wandered to the door and passed quietly out.

Outside Cautious Jeff hesitated in the shadow of the building and cautiously surveyed the street. The chill Autumn air had already begun to nip a little and whine down the dark cañons, so the street was deserted save that here and there a lithe figure hastened straight across, only to enter one of the many garishly lit buildings that offered warmth and companionship to the passerby.

Jeff crossed the street, skirted around the Golden Chance saloon with it's inviting, golden-lighted front and it's drear, bottle-strewn back, down the ash-covered pathway that joined his own trail at the edge of the gulch. Then carefully picking his way down over the familiar way he crossed the icy trickle on the floor of the cañon and then up, patiently, along his mountainside to his cabin beside the great door of his mine with its new padlock.

Here Jeff paused to look down on the great mining-camp he had just left. It spread below him like a fairy city of twinkling lights set as if by magic in the mountain fastness. Wafted up on the cold clear air came the noisy clatter of dishes, the flapping of the half-shuttered doors, the tinkle of a piano, the insistent beat of a bass drum, and the rhythmic swish of dancing feet.

Back of it all roared the mighty stamp and strumming of the ore-mills in constant operation: the whine of the great sheave wheel, the clatter of an ore-car, and an occasional shout punctuating the steady roar came up to Jeff as it had every night, year after year, as he stood just outside his little cabin door.

Jeff sighed. Time had been when he had money—and spent it, too. He wagged his head sadly.

"Too keerless. I was too keerless," he murmured sorrowfully. "Oh, if I'd only been cautious, like I am now. I'd been all right. Cautious, that's the way to be. Be cautious, like me."

HE TURNED, and after fumbling momentarily with the lock, passed into his cabin, lit the carefully cleaned kerosene lamp, stirred the embers in the wide fireplace and threw on a chunk of heavy mountain-oak. After which he made a careful round of the room to see that each of the two windows was properly closed and curtained and that the bar of the door was in place. Then seating himself comfortably in his rude yet easy armchair he drew out his "mail" tenderly. Carefully he slit the flimsy wrapper with his keen pocket-knife. Mail was mail and everything from a circular letter to a cat'log always received a careful reading from Jeff.

"M-m-m-m," he mused, "Annual Fall Clearance—" he proceeded slowly—"Sale. Oh, I see. Mail-order cat'log," he announced interestedly, settling happily to carry on the conquest.

"Prompt shipment guaranteed!"

Jeff had paused to gaze admiringly at a splendid figure pictured therewith in a stunning creation of "wool mixture" at six dollars and ninety-eight cents under the head of "Becoming Fall Fashions for Women." He then proceeded, word by word, slowly, carefully to read all about the excellent workmanship and style incorporated in the garment.

Page after page he turned and read. He studied each illustration and devoured each line with a wealth of detail and attention that would have done credit to a higher critic trying to pick flaws in the Bible. Even the pages devoted to "Remarkable Values in Silver-Plated Ware" and "Our Western Disk-Harrows" received his interested and undivided attention. Only the slight rustle of the pages, turned by his moistened thumb, and his regular breathing disturbed the utter stillness inside the cabin.

Presently old Jeff came upon two illustrations that caused him to miss a whole half-page. Skipped it entirely, so intent was he on the amazing offer.

The larger of the two illustrations depicted an upstanding, trim-mustached business-man attired in a natty suit of "dark-

gray worsted," made in three-button, single-breasted style, and serviceable lining throughout. For only eight dollars and fifty cents!"

The smaller illustration portrayed a similar appearing suit adorning an even better-looking business-man. But it was merely a cheap thing, "grayish-brown worsted," to be sure, but not nearly so well-tailored as the other and priced at five ninety-eight.

Again, Jeff read the pleasing description.

"Breast pockets both outside and inside. Two side pockets with flaps. Jingo, hadn't it been a long time since he'd had a real coat with flaps over the outside pockets. Lawse, wouldn't sech a suit feel good these col' nights. To go oveh to the store in, say. My, my, how su'prized the boys'd be, a new suit on Ol' Cautious Jeff! Massy, but he'd sho' like to have one. This one—'exponent of the Winteh styles fo' men'—eight dollahs and fifty cents!"

He sat there quite a while, his old head bowed against his hand, his elbow resting on the broad arm of the chair, the catalog lying invitingly open yet unnoticed in his lap. It was so restful to just sit there and think, and ponder. The room was warm, the heavy mountain-oak chunk lay in its bed of ashes, a great, glowing lump, a softly flaming ember.

"Eight dollahs and fifty cents," Jeff's mind went on calmly. "Gosh, what a price to pay fo' a suit of clo'es. Bet 'tain't wuth that much—kain't be. Why, this here jumper only cost a dollah and a half. And these here overhalls cost a dollar and a quawtah; that'd make 'em both come to—Jeff squinted in mute struggle with his problem—"make 'em come to—to two dollahs and six bits, yeh that's what this outfit I got on costs me. Sho, kain't no suit be wuth eight dollahs and fifty cents. But still——"

Jeff's thoughts reached back, 'way back, and dragged forth remembrance of a time when he was wont to pay not eight but eighty "dollahs" for a suit. Back there when he was young "Slasher Tom" Carter, the champion hard-rock driller, young, sure and vain. Back there in old Missouri twenty-five years ago when money was plentiful in his pockets. Back there in Joplin before that heartbreaking day when by a single careless flip of a forefinger he had made himself an outlaw. Yes, yes, the day that had left Colonel Bowler . . . .

Cautious Jeff started. It wouldn't do to think of such things. He must be cautious, even in his thoughts. Old Jeff looked around the room cautiously. He must . . . .

Right then he quit thinking—to listen. When Jeff listened he couldn't think and when he was thinking he couldn't listen. Now he quit thinking to listen. A moment later he quit listening to think.

The thinking was done in a fraction of a second and Jeff leaped from his chair to the door, yanked it open as with a choking gasp he saw the black hole of his tunnel where the great door ought to be. Yes, and there was a dark figure—a man, coming out of the portal, facing Jeff. That was the noise he'd heard—the crunch of a heavy boot-heel on gravel.

With a whoop of defiance Cautious Jeff snatched his automatic from its sleek leather nest; its flash of fire and sharp report followed instantly. The figure at the tunnel threw up its arms spun half-way around and crumpled in an awkward heap.

Old Jeff saw this but darkly for as he shot he dashed from his threshold like a runner from the mark, flashed to the tottering figure and slammed shut the heavy door that had guarded the portal of his drift, thrusting the new padlock through the hasp with fingers that shook amazingly. Turning, he examined the prostrate form.

"M-m-m-m!" he muttered. "Some dang little dude minin' shark. Jest looker thar; bleedin'! Got 'im right through the chest. Let's see. M-m-m—Glory! Right oveh his ding-busted heart."

JEFF paused to ponder. His thoughts were back in Joplin again, back in the little new town thronged with mining-men, traders, new settlers, cattle-men from across the line, all straggling along the hot plank sidewalks of Main Street in a noisy, dusty jam. A sudden human eddy down the street; the action seemed to be centered at the bank.

Young Slasher Tom Carter swung eagerly toward the commotion and a moment later dashed to the doors—and inside. Older and more prudent bystanders had melted away into adjoining buildings, handy alleyways, side-streets—any way to get away. But to young Slasher Tom, poised in the doorway of the tiny bank, the situation demanded action of a different sort.

He saw before him Colonel Bowler,

president and proprietor of the little institution, standing shakily behind the cashier counter with hands upraised, defiantly facing two armed and masked men.

Tom flashed his own six-shooter from its holster and the first crashing report left but one masked man for Colonel Bowler to face. The next crash left no Colonel Bowler for the masked man to face—the Colonel had spun half-way around, blanched, and crumpled behind his cashier counter. You see, Thomas Jefferson Carter was a mining-man and not a Wild West crack shot.

The remaining bandit, being only a miner-lad like the Slasher himself, took one horrified look at his late pard lying lifeless on the new pine floor, and another even more horrified glance over the counter at the still figure of Colonel Bowler, then he fled, empty-handed, from the place. Young Slasher Tom Carter gaped but an instant longer at the devastation he had wrought, then he, also, turned and fled.

There he was, Slasher Tom Carter, running for dear life just because he had tried to defend the bank from imminent peril. Only two jumps ahead of an angry mob he was, too. Rumor had it that the bank had been ravished of all excepting the safe, Colonel Bowler slain and Slasher Tom Carter and a pal were making a getaway with the swag.

The hurtling Slasher took a look behind at the determined mob coming after him and, reeling into his second wind, he just threw her into high and hurried along. Thanks to long hours of training and years of abstinence while defending his enviable record as the champion hard-rock driller of the world—the Joplin district anyway—he outdistanced his pursuers and flashed across the Kansas line headed for the great Southwest.

GRUMBLING, old Jeff had moved over and extracted a wheelbarrow from the tangle of shovels, drills and smithing tools beside the door of his cabin and trundled it to his victim. Then he paused, listening again.

"Sounds like there's some more, left in the drift," he mused, his good ear turned toward the muffled sounds behind the door.

"Shut up in thar!" he commanded. "You—er—you-all—" he groped for an appropriate epithet—"thiefs!"

"Huh? How's that?" he placed an ear to the great door. "I got the President, eh? The President!"

Jeff rolled his eyes toward the motionless figure, then stooped and peered earnestly at the white face. He rose grumpily.

"President, nawthin'," he bawled. "I 'spose then you'uns be the Vice-President and the Speaker of the House. Well, gents make yorese'fs at home in thar. I'll tote this minin' shark down to the doc.

He stooped and gently as possible hoisted the still figure into the wheelbarrow, then seizing the cold iron handles started down the crooked little trail, bound for the company's hospital and "Doc" Keith.

As he slithered down the familiar path new stones seemed suddenly to crop out and strange obstructions trip at his backward-braced feet. The wheelbarrow handles seemed to fairly try to wrench themselves free from his restraining grasp and hurtle onward down the steep grade. And too, the appalling vision of a man, hands upraised, turning, spinning half-way around and then lying in a crumbled heap just as Colonel Bowler—so long ago . . . Jeff sought relief in speech:

"Hold back here. Feller'd think he had a runaway bull by the tail. Gosh, how you do pull; let's stop a minnit. Give a feller a rest."

Jeff skilfully let down the handles and applied pressure to serve as a brake to his vehicle and stopped.

"Dang skeery business," he sighed. "Skeered to go too fast, skeered to go too slow. Skeered of fallin' off one side and skeered of runnin' into the other. Skeered to take the load to the hospital and skeered not to. Skeered of the load, the road and the consequences. Skeered, skeered, skeered! Lawsy!"

Old Jeff mopped cold sweat from his hatless brow, resumed his hold on the handles and started on—sliding, straining, swearing.

"Oughtn't to done it," he declared aloud. "Too keerless again. Ought to been mo' cautious. Jingo, why kain't I never learn to be cautious. Missed a fine chanct this time. I'd ought to asked this feller fust, 'What you-all want?' er somethin' like that; but no, had to be keerless again. Massy, ain't I in another jam! And walkin' right on ahead—into some more."

Cautious Jeff finally tottered to the sand-wash at the bottom of the grade. He let down this burden with a sigh of relief.

"Now, then, got you down here to the water." He scooped up a double handful of the icy trickle and splashed it over the face of his prey. "I'll see—"*splash*—"ef I kain't —"*splash*—" revive you some!"

Splash! splash!

The only response from the patient in the wheelbarrow was a feeble remonstrance accompanied by a weak moan of agony and protest.

Jeff listened solicitously.

"Gosh, you must be a lot deader'n I thought for. I'd 'a' thought that much cold water'd revive a 'Gypshun mummy. Thar's need fer haste here, men."

He stooped, with a growl of dismay directed at the pains in his old back and legs, seized the handles and shoved the wheelbarrow forward a few steps.

"Well, hadn't thought of that," he exclaimed a moment later, cheerfully dumping his passenger out and turning the carrier up to drain out whatever blood had accumulated in the bottom.

"A dozen drops," he observed scornfully. "Why, you bloodless coyote, I'd hoped there'd be two or three gallons anyhow to dump. My gosh, this here's awful."

Jeff rested, arms akimbo, and glared at the huddle.

"Here, you will shuck some weight," he declared getting down stiffly before the body and removing the pair of heavy mining-boots.

This accomplished, he tumbled his patient back into the wheelbarrow and recommenced the gruelling climb.

"Judas! You're heavy, even yet," he panted. "Them's heavy clo'es you got on. If I wasn't skeered of your freezin' to death I'd strip you plumb neck-ed! I would."

Grumbling, old Jeff resumed his burden. Up and up he struggled, his feet rising and falling in short, unsteady treads as he shoved the heavy barrow up the stony trail. The muscles of his back and shoulders smarted and burned under the strain. In his head was a sullen roar.

Once before he had felt like that. It was when he—Slasher Tom Carter—in the full vigor of his young manhood, teamed with "Striker Clem" MacDonigal and had won the grueling double-jack drilling contest that gave him the title of champion hard-rock driller of the world.

"Hah!" old Jeff expelled his breath in a short rasping hiss, just as he had done twenty-five years ago at each slashing stroke of the sledge. "H-h-hah!" he remembered that drilling contest as if it were yesterday. Up, down, up, down, he had swung the heavy double-jack as Clem deftly turned the steel.

"H-h-hah!" went old Jeff's breath at regular intervals as mentally he drove home mighty strokes on the steel, and up, down, up, down, went Jeff's poor old limbs, unequal of themselves to the task but driven on by will-power—Slasher Tom's will-power. Even as that same will-power had lifted Slasher Tom, small as he was, head and shoulder above his fellows—champion hard-rock driller of the world.

Once more he heard the clang of the sledge against the drill. His muscles knotted to the strain.

"Hah!" he expelled his breath in his old-time driving hiss. "H-h-hah!" Just as he had punctuated each stroke. "H-h-hah!" A sharp pain flashed through his chest as his old lungs protested against the strain. "H-h-hah!"

Again he heard the clang of the drill. He heard the roar of approval from the crowd as he dropped the heavy sledge and deftly seized the throbbing steel . . . .

He recovered himself, tottering on the edge of the narrow, rocky trail.

"Wow!" he exclaimed. "Like to have drapped all this junk off the mounting—wheelbarrer, critter and all. Judas—" he gasped, peering calculatingly back—"Priest. That's handy; go off in a trance and wake up half-way to the top. Wisht I could go to sleep agin and wake up—work all done. Sakes, I didn't know one man in a barrer could be so hefty!"

Wearily he resumed his unsteady journey.

"Here, dug-gone you, don't spraddle out so. Fold up!"

He stopped long enough to rearrange the posture of his passenger.

"If I'd been cautious I'd 'a' waited and shut you in the drift too. Druv you back in, durn you, jest like chasin' a obstinate mule back into the corral. Jest like."

THE door of Jeff's drift, not having been made to withstand assault from within gave before the combined onslaught of the two active young mining engineers imprisoned behind it so before Jeff had quite reached the crest of the grade he heard hasty steps scattering the

pebbles of the trail behind him. Suddenly he felt a firm grasp at his collar as one seized him while the other brushed roughly past and took the wheelbarrow from his unresisting grasp, much to the relief of the exhausted Mr. Cottin.

"You ignorant old faker," the engineer at the wheelbarrow snarled at Jeff. "You confounded old murderer! We'll put you through for this," he continued positively.

Cautious Jeff's already wildly thumping heart essayed a complete flip-flop while his tired frame slumped forlornly. He didn't want to get away—he didn't even want to try. So different from that time when he had breezed across the Kansas line without stopping to assist his prey to the doctor—not that other time he hadn't! But here he was, this time, collared.

Jeff's captor, Wayland Bruce, attributing the lagging footsteps to stubborn resistance dragged him along.

"Hustle along, Jeff," he directed. "Thought you could gold-brick the company, hey? Well, Jeff, we looked her all through and your precious drift isn't twenty feet long, and nothing but a gash-vein at that. Just a pocket of diorite."

Old Jeff stumbled along meekly, guided and propelled by the strong arm of the mine-superintendent. To Cautious Jeff it was the arm of the law descending at last after all these years of cautiously guarding his secret. He moved dazedly.

The grumbling mining experts had scuffled up the slope to the company's hospital and delivered the wounded magnate into the capable care of Doctor Keith, whose genial, ruddy countenance and kindly efficiency had given an air of cheerful hospitality to the busy little hospital for more than a decade.

At this juncture, his customary caution ascendent, Old Jeff essayed to slip away, presuming to call upon his old legs for a more complete effacement.

"Here, Jeff!" The surgeon roughly seized Jeff's tired shoulder. "You old ruffian," he continued, concealing his own emotion under a mantle of rudeness. "We won't let you slip off in this condition—on a night like this. Come on in with me. You're going to get warmed up and a soft bed to sleep in."

"She's all off now, I'll bet a 'dobie dollar,'" Jeff mumbled as he distrustfully intrusted himself to the ministration of an interne at the command of the aged surgeon.

While Doctor Keith and the remaining assistant of his little staff, immaculate in their surgical gowns, finished dressing the wound of the magnate, MacLain, Cautious Jeff writhed and tossed in restless slumber. His old nerves had received a tremendous shaking up, disturbing dreams pervaded his sleep; visions of the gallows, nightmares of wheelbarrows.

Old Jeff grunted in his sleep. He was back again poised in the doorway of Colonel Bowler's bank. The colonel was standing shakily behind his high cashier counter, his hands upraised, defiantly facing two armed and masked men. Jeff flashed his own six-shooter from its holster. . . .

Cautious Jeff Cottin gasped and awoke with a startled squawk, only to find himself pressed back gently to his pillow by the smiling Doctor Keith.

"Well, old-timer, what's the matter with you?" the surgeon inquired genially.

"Old-timer yourself," returned Jeff. "You've been here as long as I have." Then lowering his voice to a hoarse whisper, calculated to denote reverence, he inquired anxiously, "D'you reckon he'll live, Doc?"

"Sure he'll live. Want to remember, Jeff, that I'm his physician. Of course he'll live."

"He'll live!" Jeff marveled. "Goin' to live? That minin' shark that I just—er—that feller I—"

"Wounded," prompted the doctor, kindly, "Mr. Angus McLain, it is. Himself and no other."

"Yeh, him. Not a-goin' to croak? You sure?"

"Not a-goin' to croak," soothed Keith, gently. "I sure. It's a clean wound, Jeff. He's coming around all right. We've never let a case of tetanus develop since I've been here, so don't worry. He realized he was taking a chance when he went over to investigate your claim."

"Him, not a-goin' to croak!" whispered Jeff dazedly. "Why—why—mebby——"

His voice trailed off to a mere moving of lips. Finally he dared to venture:

"Doc, you reckon I'm a-goin' to croak?"

The surgeon laughed heartily.

"Of course not, Jeff. Why, I'm older than you and haven't half as much hair yet I never think of dying. Pshaw, Jeff, you're good for thirty years yet if you don't worry yourself to death."

"Yeh, but—but, Doc, you see, we're different, you an' me. I've got a lot to worry about. I—I——"

Jeff hesitated, then crooked a beckoning finger mysteriously.

"Say, Doc," he whispered, throwing caution recklessly aside. "Say, Doc, tell me, you remember when you used to live back in Missoury? Back in Joplin, before you came out here?"

"Yes, Jeff, I can not tell a lie. I'm guilty. I guessed my first prescription and bungled my first fracture right there in Joplin, Missouri. Witness my hand and seal. What's the idea, Jeff?"

"Well, Doc, I jest wanted to ask you if—did you ever 'tend to anybody back there that was—nicked similar to this minin' dude we've got on our hands now? It jest struck me mebby——"

"Why, I don't remember," replied Keith, slowly. "Perhaps——"

"In a bank, mebby." Jeff prompted, desperately.

"In a bank," Keith meditated. "Was there a bank in Joplin in the early days? H-um. If there was it's a cinch I didn't have any money in it. Why, yes, there was one started up three or four years after I did, Colonel Bowler——"

"Colonel Bowler!" Jeff shouted the name involuntarily.

The aged surgeon gazed intently at Jeff a moment, then closed his eyes, chuckling reflectively.

"So that's it," he mused, nodding silently, "so that's it."

Then he continued aloud:

"So that's the reason you've been holding out on that drift of yours all these years. Trying to make people think you had a reason for staying on the claim, eh? Just wanted a place to hide out in and thought you'd make it look plausible while you were at it. Watching me, I suppose. Jeff, I'm on to you both ways—you are a cautious old fool!"

OLD Jeff had slid down in the bed and drawn the covers up around his face while the doctor scolded him until only his forehead and bushy eyebrows remained visible above the snowy blankets like a pallid moon half-hidden by fleecy clouds. He resurrected his head suddenly.

"Doc, I jest kain't be cautious and stay cautious. There's no use of me tryin' to keep cautious no mo'! When you came out to these mountains I reco'nized and remembered you. I remembered seeing you in Joplin, many a time. Well, sir, I watched you and follered you 'til you came up here and took oveh the hospital for the old original Copper Chief Company. I located them claims acrost the gulch and hung on, like you say. I wanted to ask you about it but I was skeered to. I wanted to talk 'bout Joplin, but I didn't dast. I wanted to know if Colonel Bowler—if—if——"

Jeff ended weakly and paused expectantly like a prisoner awaiting sentence.

The benign old Missouri doctor watched him knowingly.

"Yes, Jeff, you're a cautious old fool. You've been too darned cautious. Colonel Bowler advertised everywhere for you, and he asked me especially, when I started West for my health, to be on the look out for Tom Carter. But, Jeff, I've never recognized you. I'd never have known you if you hadn't told me just now, yourself. You seem to be the only one not in on the secret. You've been too cautious, Jeff."

Jeff nodded imperceptibly.

"I know all about how the crowd chased you across the line," continued the doctor, "because I was in the bunch. But, Jeff, if you'd not have run you'd never been chased. Colonel Bowler was not shot, he wasn't even scratched!"

"But, Doc," Jeff remonstrated, weakly, "he spun half-way around, white as a sheet and flopped right down behind that counter. And that hold-up lyin' out thar on the floor——"

"Oh, you got the hold-up all right. You can't miss 'em all," jested Keith, laughingly. "But you didn't hit the colonel."

"He drapped," commented Jeff, tersely.

"Yes, Jeff, I'll agree with you there—he drapped. But after you and the rest of us left he got up and ran out into the street to hunt you up and thank you for saving the bank from robbery."

"He drapped like a rock, in the bank," insisted Jeff.

Doctor Keith lowered his voice.

"Just between you and me—he fainted!"

"Fainted!" whooped Jeff in amazed unbelief.

"Doc! You mean to tell me Colonel Bowler pulled through? Him a-livin' all this time?"

"You bet he is, Jeff. Him a-livin' and a-wantin' to make it square with you, while you're a-talkin' about it."

"What's 'come of him now?"

"His bank is about the biggest institution of it's kind in southern Missouri, and Colonel Bowler is still at the head of it, too. That's the main thing that's 'come of him' now."

"Glory Halleluiah!"

Jeff had flung back the covers and was struggling into his tattered garments. Again he was hearing the glad clang of the sledge on steel, the roar of approval from the throng. It put youthful strength into his old legs, his self-confidence was reviving, the drear past was swallowed up in the promise of a joyous future. Old? He was good for thirty years yet. Doc had said so. He straightened his rheumatic shoulders and shrilled:

"I had six thousand dollars in that rooster's bank when I left—on int'rest! Glory, me pokin' around cautious all these years and him a-waitin' fer me to come and get my money. Six thousand dollars on int'rest fer twenty-five years! Duggone it all, I'm goin' back to ol' Missoury and be somebody!"

"Aren't starting right now are you, Jeff?" the doctor inquired. "You'd better rest up a week here with me first."

"I'm goin' oveh to get my cat'log." Jeff's eyes glowed with pride. "I'm goin, to fix 'em a check on Colonel Bowler and send and get that suit. Yes, sir, I'm goin' to get that suit. Eight dollars and fifty cents!"

"All right, Jeff, as you like," replied Keith, happily. "But remember, you must sign your name Tom Carter. Colonel Bowler doesn't know anything about this Cautious Jeff stuff, you know."

Old Jeff grinned from the doorway.

"Cautious Jeff Cottin," he jeered, "And all them Missoury folks a-waitin' fer Slasher Tom Carter to come back home. "Cautious Jeff!" He spat the words from him contemptously, "Cautious Jeff! Bah!"

DEAD RECKONING

by Jack Bechdolt

Author of "Last Man Out" and "The Glorious Holiday."

COL. FRANK FEATHERSTONE vice-president and superintendent of the Rainier Packers purposely avoided looking at his caller, Captain Dan Halsey.

Instead Col. Featherstone fixed his eye on a calendar across the room and summoned all his resolution to say what he hated to say.

"Captain, about that freight contract—I'm afraid there's nothing doing."

Captain Dan's lips tightened slowly into a hard line.

"That means, I suppose, you've given the business to Bown—to the Tsikum lines?"

Col. Featherstone nodded silently.

"And yet my bid was——"

"Yes, your bid was lower—quite a bit lower, Captain Dan."

"Then——"

"Unfortunately, against my personal wishes, we have thought it best," Col. Featherstone began formally.

Something seemed to choke him.

"Colonel, you yourself said the service we gave you the last two years with our steamer *Queen* was more than satisfactory to——"

"The company," answered Featherstone, "is not satisfied with your financial ability

to continue adequate service, we—oh, hang it all, Dan! Sit down. Listen to the advice of your father's friend. You know blame well why I couldn't give you this contract. All the fleet you've got's the old *Puget Queen* that was a good boat about the time of Grant's inauguration——"

"And is still," interrupted Captain Dan. "Besides, I told you I could add another boat if we renewed this contract——"

"And the grand admiral, port captain, navigator and—yes, I'll bet he's mate as well, half the time—the whole officers' staff of this grand fleet of yours is old 'Fog-Horn' Hood who lost his ticket back in the days of the Spanish War for wrecking the *Star* on a moonlight night, and hasn't had a berth since until you picked him up."

"And a better skipper never jingled a bell," blazed Captain Dan, smashing the broad-topped desk with his fist. "You know that——"

"I know he's a drunken bum—been the laughing-stock of the front for years—a bar-fly——"

"Not for two years—at least not when he was on duty," Dan corrected. "Besides," he swept on, "if he was a drunken bum who was to blame? Who? Richmond P. Bown, the man whose dirty work Hood did, the man who kicked him out when he had done it. Because business was bad Bown overinsured that rotten old *Star* and forced Hood into wrecking it for him, and what did Hood get for doing what cost him his ticket for ten years?"

"That's an old scandal that was never proved," Col. Featherstone protested.

"If you knew Hood as I do, you wouldn't ask for proof," snapped Captain Dan. "No, Colonel, you can't tell me that's why I don't get that freight contract. I know why! Bown's hogged the entire freighting and passenger business on the sound. The Tilikum Lines is an air-tight, double-soldered trust and Bown won't stand for another man making a living. He's been 'round to the banks and cut off my credit everywhere.

"He knows I'm broke if I don't get this contract of yours, and through the banks or some way he's got you tied up—aha! So that's why I saw Darius Nye of the Tidal Trust Company going out of here! Came all the way from Seattle to knock my business in the head, did he?"

Col. Featherstone was silent under this accusation. When he finally spoke it was to plead:

"Dan, can't you see they've got you licked, boy? Go see Bown, sell him what's left of your business while there's something to sell—you can't buck that outfit——"

"Col. Featherstone," said Captain Dan stiffly, "you know very well why I don't sell out to Bown. My father was making a good living and had a decent fleet when Bown came to this country with railroad money to back him. Bown began by buying away Fog-Horn Hood, dad's best skipper. He underbid dad everywhere. He worked every kind of crooked racket from arson to burglary until he broke dad's heart.

"But he hasn't broken me yet and by—— he's not going to! What would my father think if he saw me quitting? What would my wife think? I'll fight Bown till he gets me and when he does, we'll go down giving 'em —— to the end. Pass that word on to Bown."

With this defiance Captain Dan started out of the office of the Rainier Packers' superintendent. He was back in half a minute with hand extended and a friendly grin on his lean, brown face.

"Mind you, Colonel," he cried heartily, "I don't hold this against you personally. Good-by and good luck to you—and I hope Bown robs your company blind with his freight bills."

Col. Featherstone grinned back, but he had to wink a little additional moisture from his eyes.

"The *Queen's* bound down tonight?" he asked.

"Yes, to pick up that shipment at the Fir Point cannery, the stuff that's to go to the Japanese liners, our last little job for you, Colonel——"

"Don't bother."

"What!"

"No, don't take it," sighed the fisheries boss. "Bown is sending the *Councilor*. His contract begins today."

Captain Dan merely nodded.

He walked briskly out of the offices of the Rainier Packers and toward the water-front. He carried his head high and his gray eyes met the gaze of every person who passed. There was nothing in the outward appearance of this brisk, cool, lean business-man of thirty-seven that would tell the world he had just walked the plank and was about to jump into oblivion.

As he walked he settled the meager details of his plan. It was an alternative he had considered before during his long, obstinate, hopeless fight against the firmly-entrenched shipping trust.

That the scheme was as dishonest as all of his previous personal and business life had been honest, he had duly considered before making a decision. What he was about to do was in every way repugnant to him; when he had done it he could only look upon himself with loathing.

But his reason for doing it was more powerful than his loathing of dishonesty.

THE *Puget Queen* lay across the slip-way from her rival, the Tilikum liner *Councilor*. The *Councilor* was a big, dashing, snowy-white craft with two fat green stacks, two glistening passenger decks and ample cargo room below, an all-steel hull brought recently from the Great Lakes, all the way around Cape Horn and into the sound.

Though the sun still shone the *Councilor's* windows glowed with electric lights. Passengers with burdens of luggage were clustered about her gangplank. From the cargo deck to the dock two long, double lines of freight handlers rattled their trucks in an endless belt of human energy. On her hurricane-deck a string band was playing.

There were no passengers for the snub-nosed, homely little *Queen* which aspired to no passenger license. There were no freight trucks rattling in and out of her hold either. There was little sign of life about the *Queen* and no beauty. She was fat, tubby and hump-backed with the big stern wheel that pushed her along. Her general hue was a dirty gray from soot and weather.

The pilot-house of the *Queen* was a square little box set at the extreme forward end of her brief hurricane-deck. By way of ornament the roof of this box had once been fenced with a "mill work" crown of wood. Time and the elements had reduced this to a few snags that gaped at the world like a toothless old man.

Just outside the door of this pilot-house loafed a squat, red-faced man with a mustache, originally white, that looked like the remains of a hard-used shoe-brush. His uniform cap was thrust awry on a bushy shock of white hair. Though it was late September he wore no coat and his vest was open over a shirt of red flannel. His uniform trousers, insecurely held by a belt, bagged about his shoes and threatened to embarass him at any moment by slipping their moorings. On his feet were carpet slippers. This was Captain Fog-Horn Hood.

Captain Hood sucked at a blackened corn-cob pipe and peered sharply up the vista of street for his employer and benefactor, Captain Dan Halsey. When he spied what he sought he uttered one brief remark——

"Mr. Olson."

Considering the performance by its results, it was positively miraculous. Fog-Horn Hood had not moved, he had scarcely twitched a muscle to fetch that hoarse, warning, rasping hail from his hold, yet the volume of it sent it echoing over the quiet bay. It brought out a frowsy mate at a run and with him several deck-hands who took their places at the *Queen's* one gangplank while others sprang ashore to slip the *Queen's* bow and stern lines.

Captain Dan, his face serene as a mask, crossed the dock swiftly, nodded to the mate and sprang aboard. The plank slid in. At the mate's shout the lines were loosed and with his "All clear, sir," Fog-Horn Hood stepped into his box, jingled a bell and steadied the wheel while the great, ridiculous, overgrown stern-paddle of the *Queen* struck the water in a slow-measured, *slap-slap-slap* that inched her out of her berth.

Captain Dan stood in the wheel-house, behind the old man who was "admiral, port captain, navigator and mate" of the Halsey Navigation & Freighting Company's fleet, as Col. Featherstone had put it. Two hours had gone by and the men had not exchanged a word nor a sign except their first mute nod of greeting.

The sun was dying behind the hard, blue silhouette of the Olympic range when the imposing *Councilor* roared up from astern and surged alongside and past the tubby *Queen* without the formality of a passing signal. A moment her bright lights glittered above them and they caught a glimpse of a correctly uniformed first officer staring from her navigating-deck. Then the *Queen* was left astern, bowing awkwardly in the *Councilor's* wake like a country girl left gaping after a grand dame.

Fog-Horn Hood responded to the insult of this passing without a moment's hesitation. He threw his own wheel sharply to port, swung the *Queen* directly astern of the

big *Councilor*, so close that her bows almost scraped the Tilikum liner's paint, then straightened his course.

The bigger vessel, surging ahead at twelve knots, drew a current of water in its wake. By setting his lighter craft directly in this current Hood could hold the *Queen* just astern for a brief time, stealing a ride on the *Councilor's* momentum.

He employed this short period to best advantage by slamming open the pilot-house window and thrusting out his white head, cap askew, corn-cob shedding sparks like a pinwheel.

"You flea-bitten son of a hump-back salmon!" roared Fog-Horn. "I'll teach you to blow a passing signal. I'll l'arn some of you janitors what it's like to bust the sweet-scented, dictionary of navigation rules you're so fond o' talkin' about! Some o' you Siwash farmers and taxicab shoffers 'll be lookin' for new jobs when I get through with you, you mangy, lop-eared, bow-legged, half-witted canoeists!"

The roar of his voice swept the *Councilor's* decks like a machine-gun. Passengers sprang from the deck-chairs. Some of the women, hands to their ears, fled for the saloon. Men clustered at the stern to look down on the *Queen* which was stealing a ride for all the world like a small boy on the back of a wagon, while they marveled at the vocabulary of the wrathful old skipper.

A man in gold-braided uniform stepped quickly from a cabin on the hurricane-deck and reached the pilot-house in a half minute flat. Immediately after that the *Councilor* performed the same maneuver a transport uses when it dodges torpedoes. The big steamer yawed sharply to port, turned again on her tail and dodged to starboard, then doubled back again until she had shaken off the *Queen* and Fog-Horn Hood's rapid fire.

Fog-Horn withdrew his head with a chuckle. He glanced at Captain Dan who usually enjoyed a performance of this sort hugely. Captain Dan had not twitched a muscle. Instead he stared after the *Councilor* in the abstracted manner of one who had not heard a word.

Olson entered the pilot-house with the brief announcement—

"Supper."

He took the wheel from the captain.

"Mr. Olson, see that fog ahead?" Fog-Horn pointed. "Drive her for all she's worth till you get well into it. We'll have to hold to the outside course tonight and keep moving, because we got to get that salmon out of Fir Point cannery first thing in the morning, fog or no fog."

"No," said Captain Dan. "We'll change our plans, Captain Hood. Keep her on the inside course, Mr. Olson. If it gets too thick to run the Hole in the Wall on the slack, we'll tie up in Klahowya Bay——"

"But that there salmon—" Hood protested.

"There isn't any salmon at Fir Point—for us," Captain Dan replied briefly and passed out of the pilot-house followed by the silent Hood.

SUPPER was a mere formality for Captain Dan. Hood applied himself impartially to everything set before him on the oilcloth-covered table. Directly he had finished his meal Captain Dan motioned him outside.

"Come into your cabin, Captain," said he. "I want to talk to you."

There was something in the tone of the younger man's voice, something in his set face, that made Fog-Horn distinctly uneasy.

Both men paused instinctively, on deck, to glance into the thickening fog and sniff the weather. Then they crowded silently into Fog-Horn's box of a cabin.

"Well, Danny?" asked the older man, waiting impatiently for his employer to speak.

Captain Dan wet his lips and thrust out his firm jaw.

"Captain Hood," he began stiffly, "I'm sorry to inform you I have no further need for your services. Draw your pay up to the end of the month. Meantime I'll relieve you of command now—tonight."

Fog-Horn Hood stared dumbly at Captain Dan. By degrees the habitual red flush left his wrinkled old face. The skin showed gray with age and all of its lines drooped. A frightened, hunted look came into his watery-blue eyes.

Minutes passed. The old man lifted a corded, unsteady hand and fumbled the corn-cob from between his teeth, setting it down with minute care on the battered little business desk crowded in beside his berth. No detail of this tragedy was lost on Dan Halsey. At last, unable to stand silent reproach longer, he snapped——

"Is that clear—do you understand me, Captain?"

His voice was sharp.

Hood raised his hand again, this time to remove the mangy uniform cap. He laid that beside the pipe before he answered meekly—

"Yes, Da—yes, sir."

The pitiful humility of Fog-Horn's "sir" brought Captain Dan to his feet with a bound. He seemed on the point of an outbreak of apology, explanations, but instead he tightened his lips and moved toward the door.

"I'll relieve Olson now," he said briefly. "At midnight he can take the watch again. Don't come on deck, nor into the pilot-house again, I—I don't want you, understand? I—I—Captain, some day I'll—I'll try to——"

He slammed the door behind him in a flash of decision, leaving the old man alone in the ashes of his ambitions.

The *Queen* rumbled on steadily into the muffling September fog that shrouded her in solitude. Her one lean and rusty stack sighed rhythmically, the overgrown wheel churned a roaring wake and every beam and plank and sill in her wooden hull trembled as with an ague so that the corn-cob pipe on Fog-Horn's desk slipped slowly and stealthily across that scarred plank and dropped to the floor, spilling its ashes wide. The old man, usually fussy as a New England housekeeper, gave no heed to the muss.

In the box of a pilot-house Dan Halsey spread out a section of a dog's-eared chart close to the binnacle and studied it with a frown. He should have been navigating his vessel at half-speed and sounding a whistle constantly to comply with the laws for inland navigation, but he did neither. There was nothing in that, however, to excite comment, for except in crowded paths the little freighters went their way carelessly.

Captain Dan had opened the pilot-house windows and was staring grimly ahead into the blank, gray veil that concealed even the flagstaff on the *Queen's* bows, close as that was to him.

There was a cold sweat on Dan Halsey's forehead that was not fog. Occasionally he wiped it off with his hand. Peering so intently into the mystery of the night he seemed to be searching for something that might materialize from the mist.

In his cabin, Fog-Horn Hood stirred sharply from his tragic musing. There was a startled look on his face as he opened the door and thrust out his head, sniffing and bristling like an old watch-dog.

The startled look heightened to acute uneasiness. Once, with a shake of the head, he stepped back to his cabin, but in a second he was out again. Presently he began to pace anxiously across the little hurricane-deck, lifting his nose to the wind, growling to himself.

The deposed skipper stepped nervously back to his own door and consulted a heavy silver watch. What the watch told him took him swiftly toward the pilot-house. A moment's indecision held him at the door, then he had it softly ajar and peered in at Captain Dan.

Fog-Horn stepped across the sill and his hand stole out for the whistle-pull. The *Queen's* siren boomed a hoarse note—and another. Fog-Horn Hood thrust his head out the window, listening.

At the first rasp of the whistle Captain Dan had wheeled about. His hand flew to his coat pocket and brought out a pistol. This he had pointed squarely at the head of Fog-Horn Hood when the old captain jerked back from the window and seized the wheel in his own strong hands.

"Good fathers, Danny—" he began.

Then his jaw dropped open at the sight of the weapon.

"Get out," said Captain Dan briefly.

"Stop her, Danny, back her, quick—for the love of heaven, Dan——"

Fog-Horn tried to snatch at the bell-pull but backed off with the pistol at his chest.

"Get out," said Halsey coldly, menacingly.

"But, boy, you don't know—where you are at—you're——"

Fog-Horn's lips shut suddenly and heedless of the pistol he snatched at the bell-pull. The engines stopped with a sigh, reversed a couple minutes and stopped again as he signaled. The *Queen* drifted in dead silence, swathed in fog.

"I warned you," Captain Dan's voice grated coldly, "now by —— I——"

"You shoot!" blazed Fog-Horn Hood, angry contempt in his growl. "You? You don't dare—and you don't dare throw me out—you're afraid to throw me out, you—Danny, that I should say it to you—a crook! Give me that gun."

Fog-Horn's big fist caught Halsey's hand and twisted it sharply. With his other hand Fog-Horn snatched the weapon and sent it sailing through the open window.

"And I thought you had made a mistake!" he went on scornfully. "You that planned this thing—old Dan Halsey's son!"

Captain Dan swung his hard fist suddenly. Quick as the blow was the old man dodged it and drove home one of his own that sent Halsey staggering.

He was back again in a flash and twice his fists against Hood's ribs made Fog-Horn grunt.

THE fight raged up and down the little box of a place. There was silence except for their heavy breathing, the scuff of their feet and a thud of knuckles against flesh.

Fog-Horn closed in suddenly on the younger man. His foot shot out to trip him and his bony right fist smacked against his jaw.

Dan Halsey went down with a crash against the locker that filled the rear of the pilot-house.

He picked himself up slowly. One of his eyes was puffing shut where Fog-Horn had landed a blow. There was an open cut across his temple that trickled blood over his white ollar. He had skinned the knuckles of his right hand.

Captain Dan took stock of this damage and forgot his own troubles for a moment while a grin of admiration for Fog-Horn wrinkled his face. Fog-Horn Hood was old enough, almost, to be his grandfather, yet he had licked him—and Captain Dan was no second-rater in rough and tumble.

Fog-Horn ignored him. He had thrust his head from the pilot-house window while he sent the whistle's big note booming into the No Man's Land of fog.

It's questing roar brought him an answer in faint schoes. These echoes spoke to Fog-Horn with the voices of old friends. He nodded understandingly, satisfied with what they told him, and turned back to the man he had beaten.

"Full well I know," he growled, "you can send me to jail for the rest of my life for raising my hand again' the pilot on duty. And I don't know's I could ever prove what I know about you this night, Dan Halsey. But I saved your boat, she's over good anchorage right now—" His voice broke unexpectedly. "Danny boy, he pleaded, "tell me, in God's name, what turned you crazy—you, a Halsey, trying to smash up the old *Queen* on Klahowya Spit!"

Captain Dan sat on the cushioned locker-top, his hands clasping and opening before him, his eyes fixed on the floor.

At Fog-Horn's accusation a guilty flush burned in his cheeks. He looked everywhere but in the face of his accuser.

"Why?" he echoed dully. "Because we've reached—the end—of—our rope, that's why, Fog-Horn. Because Bown has us smashed, at last. Featherstone won't renew the freight contract——"

"The old thug—" blazed Fog-Horn.

"No, don't blame the colonel. Bown brought pressure through his financial friends. But that contract—it was my last hope. There isn't a dollar's worth of business to be had, outside that. It smashes us, all right. Fog-Horn, every cent my father left is gone, every cent I could borrow—and now Bown has got the banks started after me—I couldn't see any other way out, except the insurance on the *Queen*."

"Danny," Fog-Horn reproved, "would your dad 've tried dirty work like that. Would he be robbing any man, even that pack of cockroaches that calls themselves an insurance company?"

"Fog-Horn, would dad have sold out to Bown? No, not if hell froze over—and that was the only other way. I've got to have the money, to square my debts and—my wife, Clara, since the baby died—Fog-Horn, the doctor says if she—if—he says she's got to go to California, for two years anyhow, living out-of-doors, with nothing to worry her, no work, all she can eat. Got to have specialists that cost a pile of money——"

Captain Dan sank his head in his brown fists. Presently he burst out bitterly:

"Don't I know what a rotten thing it is! Don't I hate myself for it, but—Fog-Horn, there's nobody to sell to but Bown—and Clara—can't you see?"

Fog-Horn Hood turned back to the wheel. He tugged at the bell-pull and the *Queen* began slowly to move again into the blank wall of mist.

The old man squared his shoulders resolutely, sniffing questingly as if he would smell the land that lay close by.

He rang for full speed and suddenly Captain Dan straightened up. He was

across the little room in a bound, his eye on the compass card.

"Fog-Horn!" he shouted, warningly.

"Leave your hands off'n me," growled the old man.

"You—you're heading for—put her helm up—hard over——"

With one hand Fog-Horn sent him staggering back.

"You keep your paws off the man at the wheel," he roared.

"But you—you're heading——"

"I know where I'm heading. I—Danny, if it's got to be done, I'll do it, not you. Listen, me, I don't matter. I'm old and I'm about through anyhow—why if you was to wreck her there ain't an inspector living would believe it was accidental. But me, look't my record—the old *Star* piled up on Lummi—they'd expect it of me!"

"But I won't have it—I—I fired you anyway, get away from that wheel——"

"Danny, listen," Fog-Horn pleaded rapidly, "if you was to wreck the *Queen* you couldn't stand it, the talk that would go around, the hearing before the inspectors, the disgrace. Why, boy, it would drive you mad. Now me, I've been through it onc't. I don't care what they say——"

Captain Dan answered him by snatching the wheel hard to starboard and stopping the engines.

"Listen to me," he said steadily, an arm across Fog-Horn's shoulders. "I'm going straight through with this thing now, the decent way, I mean. Neither one of us is going to pile up the *Queen*. It's a bitter dose, Fog-Horn—I hate it worse than poison—but I'll sell for what I can, sell to Bown, pay my debts and act like an honest man, even if I have to take a job watching a fish-trap——"

"You will?"

"I will."

Captain Dan's promise brought a grin to the old man's face.

Then the grin vanished in a second. Both of them felt a sudden and alarming change in the gait of the old *Puget Queen*. One moment she had been drifting idly in the white silence; suddenly she canted to port, her nose swung about and she began to rush headlong on an invisible flood.

Fog-horn Hood rang for reversed speed.

"Give her all you've got," he roared into the speaking-tube, "and, Chief, stand by for all hell a-popping!"

"We're outside the spit—in the channel?" gasped Halsey.

"Danny," panted Fog-Horn Hood, "if you know how to say a prayer, say one now—for the old *Queen*. The tide's got us. We're going through the Hole in the Wall.

THE Hole in the Wall supplied the nightmares of every old-timer on the sound.

Between the rocky shores of a long island and the cliffs of the mainland, this dreaded passage coiled like a snake. Most of its length it was not wide enough for two boats to pass. The tides flowing in and flowing out attacked it from either end, making a maelstrom of its wider stretches, meeting in tidal bores that danced witches' dances between its reefs.

The modern steamers knew nothing about the Hole in the Wall. They were too large to attempt it and contented themselves with an outside passage around the island that added fifty miles to their routes.

Smaller, light-draft vessels, like the old *Queen* ran the Hole in the Wall in the slack water between tides, but usually they waited for daylight to do it. A few old-timers, like Fog-Horn Hood, plowed through in the night. But no man ever dreamed of attempting the Hole in the Wall when the tidal flow was at its height and to try it in the fog as well was sheer madness.

But the *Queen*, drifting, wandering erratically, in the bewilderment of purpose that had reigned in her pilot-house, had poked her nose beyond Klahowya Spit. The moment she was outside the haven where she might have lain snug till the fog cleared, the chuckling tide-rip, racing into the Hole in the Wall, had seized her and no power of steam or human ingenuity could pull her back again.

If Captain Dan Halsey said any prayers he said them to himself and hurriedly, between the more pressing thoughts that occupied his attention.

Fog-Horn Hood thrust him rudely against the wheel and hung his own body half out of the window while he set the *Queen's* whistle talking.

"There's the double echo," he began suddenly. "We're off the old Henderson traps—midchannel too. Steady her, Danny—steady as she goes."

The whistle questioned again.

"Straight course from Henderson's on to

Skookum Rock," he went on, "hold her dead on till I tell you." He whistled again and listened. "Not yet, boy—not yet—tide sets strong off the rock; slack water's across the channel, but it's too shoal at half-tide. Now! Hard over!"

The two of them flung themselves upon the wheel which fought them like a live thing.

"Stop her!" Fog-Horn barked into the engine-room tube.

Mentally the struggling pair at the wheel could see the picture—the tubby *Queen*, rushing headlong for the cliff in the grip of the tide, veering suddenly, almost as her nose touched the rocks, clawing away from destruction.

Fog-Horn rang for speed ahead.

"Give her plenty," he added through the tube.

The *Queen* tipped dizzily to one side, groaning and racking her old timbers. The gait changed suddenly to an awkward dance step, as if an aged truck-horse were trying to do a jig.

"She's by," sighed Halsey.

They straightened their course again.

"If them poor half-wits in the Survey was about average wrong when they made the last calendar, we lack an hour of the flood-tide," muttered Hood who had all the old-timer's scorn for Federal tide-charts.

The wheel began to kick again and the *Queen* canted smartly to port.

"Yep," added Fog-Horn, "just about an hour less the flood—that's the first big pool. Ease her to port, Dan, where there's better water."

Again the big whistle gasped its questions and Fog-Horn cocked his ears into the mist. Deprived of sight he was hearing his way through perils, depending on his accurate memory of every rip and eddy, every rock and reef and gravel bank, each hill and hollow and homesteader's clearing that bordered the boiling channel. Echoes spoke to him of each familiar point in their course, and lack of echoes was as eloquent a guide.

He was depending, too, on the tide-table's accuracy and his own veteran memory of the speed and inclination of the flow. From point to point a miraculous little chronometer in his brain ticked off the seconds while he guessed blindly at their speed.

Dead reckoning!

On every water trail there are a few old-timers who can do magic with it.

But there are few like Fog-Horn Hood.

Sometimes the *Queen* drifted with engines stopped, racing at express-train speed. Again she ploughed stubbornly against the counter-currents in the eddies, wabbling, careening, sousing her blunt nose in the cross seas.

Blind as a bat, she kept on, shaving a rock here; dodging a cliff there; shying away from reefs like a frightened deer.

"Here's Cultus Spit," Fog-Horn announced suddenly. "Feel the tide piling up against it where she shoals? Keep her a little farther out, Danny, that's better. Stop her—no, let her drift. If we got to hit, we'll hit easy. Poor old *Queen*, she can't stand much of a crack on the nose now!"

Together they peered out of the window as if they could actually see the spit as clearly as their brains saw it—a shallow reef that reached out across the channel almost to the cut bank opposite, a reef of ugly boulders, marked for the observant eye by streaming brown kelp.

But no eye could see kelp on such a night. They had to trust to luck to take them through this fine-toothed comb of disaster.

Silence like a churchyard. Even the whimper of steam in the exhaust died away.

They could hear the clucking of the tide among the rocks.

Unconsciously their heavy breathing quieted—they ceased to breath at all for one awful moment.

There came a jar that made them stagger, a muffled *bump-bump-bump*. Captain Dan moved the wheel up half a spoke to clear them of the rock.

"Gosh A'mighty!" Fog-Horn sighed like a porpoise. "She's over," he announced calmly and added into the tube, "All the steam you've got now, Chief."

As the big stern wheel started the *Queen* sprang to life. Her bows lifted high on a wave, pointed skyward and dropped again. There came a subdued clatter of loose stuff on the move.

"It's the big whirl," Fog-Horn explained briefly. "Once we're out of that, and into the straight chute——"

He had time for no more. A furious cross seas where the two tidal-streams met sent them staggering, clinging to the wheel to keep their footing.

Headway stopped as if they had hit a stone wall. The aged hull quivered.

For several minutes that seemed forever the *Queen* stood still, unable to breast the tide. Suddenly she slipped, shot ahead with some favoring flaw, stopped again—began to nose into the tumbling stream, shivering with fright.

IT WAS about five o'clock in the morning that Mate Olson came from his cabin, rubbing his eyes, bewildered.

Nobody had called him to stand watch. He could not make it out.

The fog was gone and the eastern sky turning light gray. Slowly it dawned on him, as he glanced about, where the *Queen* was. His deliberate brain reasoned it out. There was only one way they could have reached this position—through the Hole in the Wall. He remembered last night's fog.

"Yumping Yosef!" he exclaimed with a fervor that made the words a prayer.

He started for the pilot-house at a run, eyes wide and jaw hanging.

The exultant pair at the wheel had forgotten the mate, forgotten the hour, everything except the thing they had accomplished between them.

They had brought the *Queen* safely past the gates of hell. They had won!

Fog-Horn abandoned the wheel to the mate without a word of explanation.

"Steady as she goes," he remarked. "Never mind Fir Point cannery this trip, they—hello, Danny, ain't that a launch coming out?"

It was a launch that was puttering toward them from the cannery on the point. Its shrill whistle was piping and a man on deck waved wildly at them.

The *Queen* stopped and the launch came alongside.

"Captain Halsey," hailed the launch's passenger, Stowe, the cannery-boss. "Can you take that shipment of ours for the *Yakamura Maru* this trip? Right away?"

"No, I can't," snapped Captain Dan. "That's Bown's contract now. Wait for the *Councilor*."

"Listen, Cap, we got to get those cases into Tacoma by five o'clock. The *Yakamura* sails tonight and——"

"The *Councilor*—" began Captain Dan.

"The *Councilor* tied up for the fog, outside Hat Island. We got word at midnight, and that shipment—we've been short on three consignments already, and our customer in Japan is threatening to break his contract. As a special favor——"

"Let Bown do you favors."

"Well, listen, Cap, will you come ashore and talk to Col. Featherstone over the 'phone? He said he wanted you to call him up, very important."

Three-quarters of an hour later Captain Dan Halsey quit the telephone in the cannery office and waved a greeting to Fog-Horn Hood, lounging as usual at the pilot-house door.

"We'll take on that fish here, Captain," he shouted.

Fog-Horn's hail routed out Mr. Olson and set the necessary human machinery in motion before he found time to question Captain Dan.

"My gosh A'mighty, boy, you didn't let that there old shark keelhaul you again?" he queried solicitiously.

"I did not," affirmed Captain Dan. "Bown's contract isn't signed yet, and it won't be, not this time! Fog-horn, I held up the colonel and he was tickled to death to be held up, just between you and me. He came through. The contract's ours—and we won't sink the old *Queen* yet, not by a long sight."

Between the old captain and the young one there passed a long, silent glance that spoke volumes of their thanksgiving for the courage to fight on.

WITCH-DOCTORS

A Four-Part Story

PART II

by Charles Beadle

Author of "The Winged Avenger," "The Black Lure," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

ON A bayou of the great lake that is the northern boundry of German East Africa lay the station of Ingonya. Round mud huts housed the native troops, and in a red-pillared bungalow lived the young *Kommandant*, Herr Ober-Leutnant Hermann von Schwitzer und zu Pfeiffer.

When zu Pfeiffer learned that the man who came to the post one day for an elephant license was an American, his manner grew most cordial.

"So you go to the Wongolo people, Professor Birnier," he said. "You will find them most interesting. King-gods, witch-doctors, and all that."

But the American was staring at a picture that hung upon the wall.

"Who—who is that?" he gasped.

Zu Pfeiffer stroked his upright mustaches complacently.

"That," he said, "is my fiancée."

"My ——!" cried the other. "It is my wife!"

Zu Pfeiffer choked with rage.

"*Teufel hol'es!* Sergeant!"

A white non-commissioned officer appeared at the door.

"Arrest that man!"

Two days later Birnier, charged with being a Swiss spy, set out for Dar-es-Salaam under a native guard. Such is the working of Prussian jealousy.

Before the party left zu Pfeiffer called the colored corporal to him.

"Corporal Inyira," he said, "this man is an enemy of your people as well as of mine. He will sell you all into slavery—if he lives. He must never get to Dar-es-Salaam alive. Understand?"

The corporal understood.

FROM the eight hundred huts of the City of the Snake, in the land ot the Wongolo, rose shouts of praise and thanksgiving. After a long drought the rain had come.

Kawa Kendi, the new king-god, had brought the rain. By chant and incantation he had summoned it from the sky. As king-god and incarnation of the idol Usakuma, the spirit of the Snake, rain-making was his chief function.

For failure at this function the chiefs and witch-doctors had slain his father. Then with weird ceremony and strange rites they had put him in his father's place.

King-gods had to renounce many things, including their wives. They took their place by heredity. Bakuma knew this and trembled with joy and fear. Bakuma was a maid of the village. She loved Zalu Zako, the son of Kawa Kendi.

But Zalu Zako did not know of the girl and her love.

To Marufa, the witch-doctor, went Bakuma for a love-charm.

"Bring me a fat goat," said Marufa.

"*Aiel Aiel* No fat goat have I!" cried the girl.

Bakuma was in despair. M'Yalu, a young warrior, loved her. She feared he would buy her from her uncle before she could win the love of Zalu Zako.

To Marufa went also M'Yalu.

"The girdle of Bakuma is already tied," said the witch-doctor.

"By whom?"

"By Zalu Zako."

"*Ehh!* Hast thou medicine powerful enough to trap the soul of Zalu Zako when it wanders?" came the quick question.

"For three tusks of ivory I can do it."

"*Ehh!*"

"Bring me of his toe-nails one paring, of his hair one, and his spittle and a foot-print."

"*Ehh!*"

Thus was plotted the death by enchantment of Zalu Zako, son of the Snake.

VI

IN THE violet shadow of his square hut inside the compound squatted Zalu Zako. The lips and nose were nearer to the Aryan delicacy than the negroid bluntness, for the Wongolo, like the Wahima, are a mixed Bantu-Somali race. In color his skin had the red of bronze rather than the blue of the negro, and the planes of his molded chest were as light as the worn ivory bracelets upon his polished limbs. Broad in the shoulders, he had almost the slender hips of a young girl and his carriage was as balanced as a dancer's.

From a group of small round huts behind his square hut, where dwelt his two wives, concubines and slaves, came a clutter of voices. A distant drum throbbed gently on the hot air. Away in the cool green of the banana plantation rose the crooning chant of the unmarried girls and slaves bringing water from the river.

Apparently Zalu Zako was absorbed in the movements of a diminutive chicken scratching in the soil. The omen of the goat was occupying his mind: that and the death of his grandfather, Mfunya Mpopo. There was no sense of grief, for he was a warrior, not a woman. At the very beginning of his warrior's career he had no desire for divine honors and celibacy. No man had.

Yet Zalu Zako no more dreamed of questioning the necessity than of spitting in the face of an enemy. Always had the first-born male of his family been doomed to the kingly office. There was never a second-born male, for it was not meet that a god should have paternal brothers.

The wives of his youth and his concubines could have as many children as they could bear; but according to the law did he select the chief wife, from whom should spring the one royal son, only when he had become heir apparent; for then was he not already half-divine, being so near the sacred enclosure up on the hill?

The choice of that chief wife was free, for there were no royal families, in the sense of divine descent, save the direct male line of the king-god. But more upon his personal career dwelt the mind of Zalu Zako. The life of a warrior was sometimes short and that of a god even briefer. Mfunya Mpopo had reigned but twenty moons; Mkoffo, so said the elders, had reigned for full two hundred moons, but then he was a mighty magician.

As Zalu Zako pondered came a harsh squawk and a brilliant scarlet and blue bird with an enormous yellow bill perched on the palisade of the compound. Immediately the young man forgot his musing and rose, calling for his spear. A stocky man, coal-black, with a fuzzy tuft of a beard, came out of the hut. From the slave Zalu Zako took a broad-bladed spear with a short haft. Watching to see that the bird was still sitting on the fence as he passed out of the compound, he set off rapidly through the village and into the banana plantations in search of a wart-hog which had been rooting up one of his fields of sweet potatoes. Just as he came within sight of the field a black field-rat sprang out of the grass in his path, glanced 'round at him and disappeared.

The young man's steps slackened, for he knew that the black rat had spoiled the luck which the banana-eater had portended. Scarcely troubling to glance around the field he diverged across at an angle for a break in the jungle where he knew was the trail of the boar. But he grunted contemptuously as he examined the last trail, which was at least half a day old. Of course the hog would not be there.

He bethought himself of another field, where sometimes came buck. But there was no sign of game. The black rat again! Yet if one waited long enough a good omen might appear. As he squatted beneath a banana plant to take snuff came a squawk and the banana-eater—for it appeared to be the same one—perched on a frond near to him.

Zalu Zako waited. The bird remained. Leisurely and cautiously he rose. The bird peered at him. Zalu Zako passed and left the bird still sitting there. He felt the weight of his spear tentatively, for a double omen of luck must mean big game. Possibly an eland or a leopard.

He circled right around the outskirts of the plantation. But he saw no sign of game. As he began to make the big circle again the shadows were lengthening appreciably. Passing by the ford of the small river, which was swollen from the rains, he heard a group of young girls chattering on the river bank as they filled their gourds. He paused to test which way the wind was blowing in order to avoid going down-wind, where the sound of their voices would scare away any game.

But as he turned to move on he caught a glimpse of a figure mounting the incline. The motion was as lithe as that of a young giraffe; the legs were straight and supple bronze; the molded hips swayed as rhythmically as a banana frond in the breeze; the fluted arch of her back swelled proudly upward to the resilient shoulders, and an arm as slender as a lizard's tail upheld the gourd above a neck like unto a sapling.

The dappled shadows of a tree played hide and seek upon the tiny hills that were her firm young breasts, upon the smoothness of her torso of light bronze; and as he gazed her face came into view, in speaking to a comrade just beneath. An errant shaft of sunlight glinted on the pearl of teeth, glowed the tiny nose, and blued the whites of eyes which were as soft as any antelope's.

Zalu Zako clicked the syllable that means astonishment.

"Wait there, O Bayakala," the girl called, "for I have to do the making of mighty magic with the spirits of the wood."

"*Ehh! Ehh!*" responded one of those left by the water edge. "A girl of the hut thatch hath naught to do with spirits of the wood, for their bellies are as big as a hill cave!"

The young girl laughed. Her notes seemed to Zalu Zako like the dripping of water upon a river rock.

"Thou knowest less than the *baroto* bird, who, as everybody knows, is the spirit of one!"

"'Tis more than thou wilt ever be!" retorted the rival beneath.

"*Ehh! Ehh!*" exclaimed the girl at the sneer. "Thy girdle is rotted long since with juice."

"And thine," shouted the insulted one, who was old for an unmarried, "will rot with the dryness!"

"*Tscch!* It is dry for the lord whom I will conquer with magic such as thou hast never dreamed on, O Bayakala!"

"And who is he for whom thou maketh magic, O daughter of the hut thatch?" demanded Zalu Zako, stepping from the shelter of the tree.

"*Ehh!*" ejaculated Bakuma, "I—we do but tickle the fronds (jest), O Chief!"

THE ONLY sign of her nervousness was the slight swaying of the gourd of water upon her head as she turned up her eyes to the young chief, who regarded her slowly. She edged slightly away. He moved a pace in front of her. She clutched at the amulet around her neck as she turned her eyes and said—

"The cooking-fires are low, O Chief, and need be tended."

"Thy breasts are like unto small ant-hills," he said.

"Thy tongue is sweeter than the honey of the *kinglan* tree."

"Thy voice is softer than the muted lyre and thy nose is formed of two petals of an orchid."

"Thy praise is more refreshing than the morning dew to a thirsty flower."

For a full minute they stood, a study in light bronze against the dappled-green foliage. The shrill chatter of the other girls approaching startled Bakuma into action. She swayed to one side.

"The spirits of the cooking-pot cry aloud for me, O Chief!"

"Who is thy father, little one?" he demanded.

"I am Bakuma, the daughter of Bakala, O Chief."

"There has been a veil before my eyes that I have not seen before."

"The mountains see not the tiny brooks amid the mighty forests," murmured Bakuma and sped up the path.

Zalu Zako stood motionless, watching her form melt into the green. As he turned toward the river he met Bayakala and the other women, who shrank aside from the path to allow the son of the Snake to pass in silence. Yet at the ford he paused. He had forgotten the omen of the banana-eater and the purpose for which he had come.

As Bakuma sped along in a gliding lope the amulet swayed rhythmically to the whispered praises of the power of Marufa, mixed with ardent prayers to the spirits to provide the fat goat with which to propitiate the spirit of the woods. For had not the love-charm already manifested its wondrous power?

As she hastened through the banana plantation she could not resist diverging a little in the direction of the magician's hut. As she passed she saw him seated on the threshold of the compound, gathering inspiration from his favorite wall. But Marufa observed her demeanor and, being something of a student of men, he deducted that the charm had already begun to work.

Marufa, as all successful doctors, had a

slight strain of luck. Before the shadows had crept a hand's breadth came M'Yalu indignant and exasperated. The three tusks had been paid and the footprint obtained; but he had discovered that it was no easy matter to procure the other ingredients, which he suspected the wizard knew well and intended as a means to extract more ivory. After the ceremonious greetings he protested that the task given was almost impossible to execute. Marufa remained imperturbably interested in his wall.

"But as thou knowest," insisted M'Yalu, "the hair and the toe-nail and the spittle of the son of the Snake are more than difficult to obtain. Does a man so carelessly render himself unto his enemies and he the son of the Snake? None save one of his household could purloin a single hair. Even this morning was his hair shaved and the remnants, as thou knowest well, deposited in the temple with him who was his father."

"The hair, the toe-nail, and the spittle," mumbled the old man, "must I have for such mighty magic."

"*Ehh!*" snorted M'Yalu. "With a man of the clay, but with one who is half-divine, the son of the Snake! *Ehh!*"

"The bow is useless without the arrows," mumbled the old man.

"*Tsch!* 'Tis a mighty hunter that hath not the arrows to his bow!" sneered M'Yalu.

"Verily," retorted Marufa disinterestedly, "and still more a mighty man who can not do his own hunting!"

"No warrior hath been purified more frequently than I," boasted M'Yalu, referring to the ceremony incumbent upon those who have taken life to appease the ghosts of the slain.

"The spirits obey not the crowing of a cockerel," reminded Marufa.

"*Tsch!*"

For a while both sat silent, M'Yalu gloomily watching a hen. "*Aie! Aie!*" he lamented at last. "What is there that I may do for indeed she hath caught my soul in a trap? *Aie! Aie!*"

"If the hunter can not make arrows, he may buy them," remarked Marufa, who had been patiently waiting for this state of mind.

"*Eh!* The bowstring hath been costly, but the arrows! *Aie! Aie!* What wouldst thou?"

"The rich man payeth in his kind. Four tusks of fine grain."

"*Eh! Eh!*"

"Maybe there are others whose hand is not withered."

"Others than the son of the Snake?" demanded M'Yalu quickly.

"Who knows? There are more fools than chickens," muttered the old man.

M'YALU stared disconsolately at the distant bananas. Perhaps, he reflected, it would be cheaper to pay the price the girl's uncle demanded, yet—M'Yalu had bought other wives whose unimpassioned charms had quickly staled. His soul, as he put it, had indeed been tempted into a trap by Bakuma's charms; for he wished only that she should desire him as he desired her.

Yet was he angry, for love seemed to be a costly business. Marufa tapped out snuff and sniffed delicately with the air of a connoisseur devoting himself to the pleasure of the moment. Replacing the cork of twisted leaves, he stirred as if to rise.

"Canst thou procure then the nail and the hairs that are asked by the spirits?" inquired M'Yalu sulkily.

"All things are possible to the son of M'Tungo," asserted Marufa. "Four tusks and these things are found; but of fine grain, for the others were old and coarse."

"*Ehh!* How wilt thou procure these things?" demanded M'Yalu skeptically.

"The ways of the wise are not the ways of fools."

"The tusks are thine," said M'Yalu reluctantly, "if thou wilt tell me how thou wilt procure them."

"Thy words are like unto the vomit of a dog," muttered the old man.

"But how? My heart is not bound in clay."

"*Tch!*" clicked Marufa contemptuously. "Every fool must needs see the spoor of the god which he can not read. I have spoken."

M'Yalu regarded the old wizard incredulously.

"*Tch!* Send the four tusks as we have agreed and so shall it be. Begone!"

Slowly M'Yalu rose, made his greeting, and departed, more impressed than ever that the old man was a mighty magician.

During the hour when the soul is small and dwells timidly around the feet, Marufa dozed in the cool of his hut; but later when the shadows spread boldly out was he seated once more in his favorite seat at the entrance to the compound, taking snuff and

contemplating. The shadows grew from violet to blue; the small hens pecked for worms with avidity and the goats scratched with vigor in the cool.

Patiently Marufa sat. At length that for which he had waited with a sound though primitive knowledge of psychology, came to pass. Bakuma appeared, apprehensively, but with yet an abandon which sang her happiness. Beside Marufa she squatted so as to avoid the shadow of one foot protruding beyond that of the fence.

"O great and mighty magician," she began eagerly, after the formal greetings. "indeed all that thou hast said hath come to pass. Thy charm is infallible."

"*Ugh*," grunted Marufa unconcernedly.

"All that my heart desireth hath already begun to be. I thank thee."

"*Ugh*."

"O mighty son of M'Tungo, what must I now do?"

"Thou knowest," mumbled Marufa, fumbling for the snuff-case.

"*Aiel Aiel* But I have no fat goat!" cried Bakuma, who had hoped fatuously that the wizard would have forgotten. "I, a girl of the hut thatch, how should I have a goat?"

Marufa tapped snuff as if no romance were in the making. Bakuma's bright eyes sharpened by the proximity of the promise of her love, watched the old man keenly.

"Listen, O great and mighty son of M'Tungo to whom all things are known, thou who canst accomplish all that thou desirest, Bayakala, my cousin, hath a goat, but it is old and skinny. Perhaps——"

"In the nostrils of the spirits," asserted Marufa instantly, "all of odors are the same except that of the fat goat, which they love."

"*Aiel* Then am I undone, for no fat goat have I!" wailed Bakuma. "Know I no one who hath a goat who would smile upon me, a girl of the hut thatch."

"*Ugm*."

Bakuma regarded him imploringly, but Marufa's gaze was fixed upon the wall as if his mind were turned to matters of more importance.

"O mighty wizard, what must I do?" implored Bakuma desperately.

"*Ugm*."

After a prolonged contemplation said Marufa—

"If thou canst get no goat then is there another path by which thou mayest reach thy goal."

"*Eh!*"

"But it is very difficult."

"By my cord, will I do all that thou canst bid me to do," swore Bakuma in anxious haste.

"*Ugh*. The path is more certain of success. The will of the spirits are often times chary of their favors."

"O mighty one," breathed Bakuma as he pasued tantalizingly.

"But the matter is exceedingly difficult—and dangerous."

"If the flower hath no sun hath it ever lived?"

"As even thou shouldst know," mumbled Marufa, more casually than ever, "he who possesses a part of the soul may do magic thereon."

"*Aiel Aiel*"

"Bring me then of the nail-parings, one of his hairs, one, and of his spittle. Then may I do magic thereon which he can not resist."

"O mighty magician!" gasped Bakuma, appalled at the difficulty and the danger of the task.

"That path is sure. There is no other."

"*Eh!* But if they of thy craft should know then am I doomed."

"There is no other."

Torn between her love and the terror of the penalty incurred by the sacrilege of the theft of the parts of one who might any day be king-god, Bakuma stared distraught.

"Were not my words white? Hath not the love-charm thou hast already had done even as I did say?"

"O mighty one!"

"But that is only as the goat to the leopard. The trap must be dug—or the scent of the bait will be blown.

"*Ehh!*" gasped Bakuma, in desperation. "By my twin soul which dwells beneath the banana plant, will I do it!"

VII

IN MOST circumstances Gerald Birnier was a philosopher with a sense of humor which ten years' wandering about Central Africa had developed; but—when deep emotions are stirred violently these cherished qualities are able to be submerged.

The discovery of the photograph might have been explained by many surmises. Zu Pfeiffer might have met her at Washington, Paris or Berlin; she might have given him the photograph or he might have bought it, or even stolen it. All that was easily explicable. But—the signature *"à toi*, Lucille." There lay the sting which maddened Birnier and strangled reason, the fact at which his mind yawed futilely.

So great was the shock that the arrest had seemed but a secondary matter in accord with the utter insanity of zu Pfeiffer's crazy statement that he was engaged to Lucille. The whole affair was so sudden and so utterly inexplicable that for some time he could progress no farther in an attempt to think than a mental gasp. He had remained dazed, pawing mentally at a dreamlike substance which eluded him, like a child's small hand trying to grasp a toy balloon.

Sense of reality appeared to have been dissolved. He had followed the sergeant across the square meekly, without realizing what was happening, and when he had been placed in a whitewashed room at the back of the native guard room which served as a jail, he sat down upon a chair, too occupied with the clamoring thoughts to comprehend where he was. That *"à toi*, Lucille" rang like the mighty clanging in a belfry, drowning the sound of other things.

By the light of a hurricane-lamp he regarded the soldiers bringing in an old camp-bed with indifference. When they had gone he began to pace up and down the small room, frantically trying to gain control. To the first prompting of a logical reason for the whole affair he did not dare to listen. The disrupting cause was the complete inability to explain the familiar signature.

To his Anglo-Saxonized mind, bred in the strict code of the South, *tutoyer*—to "thee" and "thou"—was only permissible to dogs, inferiors, most intimate relatives, and lovers. He was far too unbalanced to see the humor as he solemnly announced that certainly zu Pfeiffer was not a dog, nor in the social code an inferior; he was not a relative; therefore—his mind balked and raced into incoherence.

A point of view which added another false premise as well as his attitude to those two little words, was the consciousness that many would consider that he had not treated his wife as a husband should do. This possibility had never occurred to him before, so that it came with disproportionate emphasis.

As a young man he had been too absorbed in his profession to be a lady's man; and of love he had reckoned little until he had met the Lucille Charltrain with whom half the world was in love. And she, doubtless, like many a spoiled beauty, was a little piqued that the professor did not join the throng of her courtiers.

In Birnier's mind there had ever been associated with love the idea that the woman would demand too much, that no woman could understand that a man's profession must of necessity come before all things. Lucille was the first woman whom he had met who really seemed to understand this point of view, for she too was devoted to her art. This had grown to be the biggest bond and attraction between them. Most men wished to make of love a nuisance, as Lucille once put it.

So the good-looking professor had won the beauty. They were married on the mutual understanding that they should each pursue his or her profession whereever it should lead them. Shortly afterward Birnier was offered a special mission to go to Africa for the purpose of studying the least-known customs and superstitions of the natives. Lucille had consented, forbidden, relented and laughed.

So Lucille sang from musical height to height and her husband sped from depth to depth in the seas of human fatuity. Whenever he took a furlough he went of course straight to her, wherever she was, in Berlin, New York, or Paris. To Birnier the situation was ideal.

He had never dreamed of any other woman. Indeed the tracts of his mind were so filled with statistics of anthropology and Lucille that there was little or no room for any one else. The delight and satisfaction in Birnier's mind was so sincere that he never had dreamed of questioning whether Lucille's point of view had remained the same. But now?

That *"à toi"* stung and baited him into the unprecedented realization that after all women had been known to change their opinions. Perhaps pride had prevented her from ever openly demanding other ways. Lucille was young and beautiful, courted and flattered on every hand.

Perhaps he had been wrong to leave her for years at a stretch. Of her loyalty he had no doubt, but for the first time in his marital life the professor's profound knowledge of human nature was shot like a spotlight on to his own affairs. Yet his erudition did not in the least relieve him from the laws of emotional reaction.

Perhaps in an emotional moment— His knowledge of the frailties of the genus *homo* were too deep for comfort in such a situation.

"*À toi*, Lucille! *À toi*, Lucille!" rang and echoed as he paced that room striving for control. And—and—why else should zu Pfeiffer have gone crazy? Why had had he exclaimed, "*Das ist der Schweinhund*"? The husband, of course, whom he wanted out of the way and had immediately seized the opportunity to secure that end, seemingly indifferent to consequences, a symptom of the state of "being in love."

AROUND and about, about and around a field of weeds which had sprung from that seed "*à toi*" paced the professor all night. When the green was creeping through the high-barred window Sergeant Schneider brought to him some coffee and biscuits. Birnier drank the coffee thirstily, and, as the sergeant had neither English nor French, tried in broken German to extract some information.

But the sergeant merely grunted and retired. At seven he returned again and escorted Birnier to the court-house. He returned from the mock trial a little more in touch with reality; and more impressed with the malignity of zu Pfeiffer. Yet the gratuitous insults, the labored farce of the registering of an alleged Swiss trader, Birnier saw through, and was relieved, for it argued that zu Pfeiffer's intention was to make Lucille a widow. No other reason could account for the homicidal intentions displayed.

At the glow of dawn next day he was aroused by the big corporal, who ordered him out. The tone of the man's voice naturally stimulated a violent reaction. But Birnier realized that his sole chance lay in controlling himself to accept stoically whatever treatment was offered; for he saw instantly that any protest or indignation might be interpreted as insubordination and possibly be made an excuse to shoot him down.

Outside in the gray light he saw under the guard of six native soldiers the five others of his party. Mungongo, his personal "boy," cried out at the sight of him, asking what was the meaning of these strange happenings. Before Birnier could reply the big corporal struck the man savagely with a *sjambok*, bidding him to be silent.

In spite of his resolution the reaction made Birnier turn angrily upon the soldier, who deliberately repeated the order to be silent and struck the white man across the face. As Birnier raised his fist the man lowered his bayonet and grinned, adding, apparently for the benefit of his men, that now the white would learn what it was to be a slave.

Furiously Birnier looked around for Sergeant Schneider; but no white man was in sight. He turned to Mungongo and said quickly:

"Take no heed. Do as they bid thee for the moment."

"Be silent!" shouted the corporal, but as he raised his *sjambok* Birnier looked him quietly straight in the eyes.

The black hand was lowered; the man turned away, ordering the party in general to march.

Disheveled and without any camp equipment, Birnier began to march as the blood of the sky paled to orange. At the bottom of the great parade-ground he turned in time to see the relieving guard falling in behind the court-house. For one moment he hesitated whether to put all to the test by refusing to go; but a significant gesture with the ever-ready rifle of the corporal signified that he would not be given a chance. Humiliated, he obeyed.

But just beyond the last hut waiting by the path was a group of women, loaded with the soldiers' gear; and beside them were some carriers bearing his green tent and apparently all his equipment. The sight cheered him a little. He attempted to find immediate consolation in the idea that the savagery of the corporal might possibly abate when they were away from the neighborhood of the inciting agent, whom he was sure was zu Pfeiffer.

Leading the caravan was a soldier; next to him came Birnier and behind him was another soldier, after whom walked Mungongo and the four other prisoners with a soldier between each; and then the corporal, strutting portentously important within

easy shooting distance of the white man. The carriers and women brought up the rear.

The path led for some miles through the dreary swamp, following the course of the small bayou, crossing and recrossing small streams, swollen with the rains, through which the white man was forced to wade to his hips. For the first mile Birnier was so angry and humiliated that he dared not catch the troubled eyes of Mungongo.

But by force of will he attained a reasonable plane of philosophic resignation, temporary at least, and smiled at the boy, who grinned back like a tickled child. At any rate, soliloquized Birnier, he had at least one man upon whom he could rely.

At the head of the bayou they reached higher ground and the path wound like an S through jungle thick with fan-palms. The longer Birnier pondered upon the situation the nearer he came toward the conclusion that he had better make his escape as soon as possible or he would never have the chance. Rather by the uneasy glances of Mungongo, who dared not speak, did he guess that they had left the regular trail to the coast.

What their destination was he could not imagine. Probably, he thought grimly, to make an end of the whole party and return to the camp. Yet why the trouble to travel so far? And another good reason to hasten an escape was that, although for the moment he was in good health, a few days of exposure would subject him to fever and consequent weakness.

Now and again the theme, "*à toi*," would return like the refrain of a song to which he found himself keeping step; but the words sometimes became meaningless, for in the merciful way that nature has the impulse of self-preservation so occupied his mind that he had scarce time to worry over marital troubles.

AT THE end of about two hours, when the heat of the sun was beginning to be felt severely, the corporal called a halt in the shade of a great baobab. Birnier sat down with his back against the bole. Alongside him sat the corporal deliberately and called to the women for a gourd of *juwala*.

There is a certain acid odor which native beer has that is particularly irritating to a dry palate. The corporal drank deep, sighed with satisfaction, and set the gourd beside him almost touching the feet of the white. Involuntarily Birnier swallowed. The corporal saw and grinned. Birnier understood and turned his back to the man.

Immediately the corporal arose and, lowering his bayonet until it pricked the sleeve of Birnier's coat, ordered him to get up. In the knowledge that he would be instantly shot by the others if he attempted to resist, he had perforce to obey.

Outside the shade of the great tree in the full glare of the sun was the white man compelled to sit, while the black corporal, with the gun ready across his knee, drank deep and handed the gourd to his fellows. Again Birnier turned his back to him. But he began to realize faintly what treatment he would receive before the end came and an intimate knowledge of native ingenuity made him feel physically sick.

Half an hour later they were on the march again. The path became rugged and difficult, passing through thorny ground, following burbling watercourses of rough stones. To make the going more trying, Birnier wore light moccasin shoes intended for camp use instead of his high field-boots. Once when a long thorn penetrated the flank of his shoe he stopped to extract it.

The corporal shouted at him; the soldier behind called him unmentionable names in the dialect and pushed him with his foot. The insult and the heat of the sun maddened him. He leaped to his feet. The corporal raised his gun promptly and jeered. For a moment Birnier stood trembling with passion; then he closed his eyes as if to shut out sight and sound and limped forward, fighting with himself.

With natives had Birnier always been able to negotiate, to live, and to quarrel, when necessary, on terms of amity; but this black "swine," as he termed him in his wrath, prinked out in a masquerade of a white man's clothes— He jammed his heel down savagely upon the thorn to divert the Southern passion. After all it was not the man's fault but zu Pfeiffer's. Put a white man in a uniform and he becomes a beast; put a nigger in a uniform and he becomes a devil, Birnier forced himself to reflect.

The day grew incandescent. The heat and the flies quickened his thirst. He plodded on, stumbling over watercourses, sagging heavily in sandy patches. They had left the comparative shelter of the jungle

and were crossing a flat plain approaching, he judged, to a river bed. The carriers, he noted, had lagged behind. Soon they must halt. Even the fiend of a corporal would not fatigue himself too much for the sake of tormenting a white man.

Then a new idea was added to the plagues. He had tasted nothing save the coffee, canned beef, and native bread which had been given him for dinner on the previous evening. The corporal had manifested his conception of humor by refusing him beer and water on the march. Was he going to torment him by starvation as well as by thirst? And if torture were reserved for him by that grinning black brute, then he knew what would be the end that awaited him.

Within an hour they came to a river about forty yards broad, a swollen, rushing torrent. There was no village as he had expected. The corporal halted. Birnier slid down the bank and thrust his muzzle into the flood. There was torture in the restraint not to drink too much. He clambered up the slope, to find the corporal grinning at him. He turned his back and lay down. There was no shade; only short scrub and grass. Small sand-flies buzzed and stung. He heard the gurgle of the corporal's military water-bottle; but this time the sting was extracted; his belly was moist.

Birnier stretched out, shielding the little that he could from the glare with his hands. Faint echoes of "*à toi*" strolled across his field of consciousness. He observed the apparent stoical indifference of Mungongo, squatted a few feet from him, a soldier sprawling between them; but he cursed because investigations had taught him that that "stoical" should usually be read "bovinity," as he had termed it; and he smiled dismally at the ancient story, that so well illustrated the point, of the peasant who expressed his occupation through the long Winter hours as, "Sometimes we sits and thinks but mostly we just sits."

Mungongo "just sits," he repeated and envied him. Yet, waiting in that heat and hunger for his savage captor to wreak some new fancy upon him, so saturated with philosophic interest in life was Birnier that he wandered off into a meditation upon the mechanical fatuity of human conduct; illustrating his reflections with his own actions when stirred by emotion. The loaded gun may be as wise as Solomon was reputed to be, he remarked beneath his hands, but all the same when some one pulls the trigger the —— thing goes off. And he sat up to confront the rifle-muzzle of the corporal, who was ordering him to get up. Birnier rose. But to the savage's amazement he smiled.

The corporal backed away.

"Ah, my friend," remarked Birnier blandly, in English, "you've lost, for I have found that which was lost!"

The corporal scowled and bade him to follow. Birnier obeyed, but he felt that he was obliging the man. The carriers had arrived and the green tent was pitched invitingly cool against the gray flood of the river. He followed the corporal gladly, but at ten feet from his tent, beside a thorn bush four feet tall which spread in a fan shape, he was bidden to sit. For the moment, newly arrived from his philosophic dreams, he did not comprehend.

"But that is my tent!" he said in Kiswahili.

"Sit down!" commanded the corporal grinning. "The white seller of slaves sits in the place of the slave, but his owner dwells in the place of the blessed."

"O God!" remarked Birnier as he bumped his head against black reality.

VIII

BAKUMA sat in the shade of the reed fence, preparing the evening meal of boiled bananas. From her slender neck swung the precious amulet, at which, as if to reassure herself of its safety, she clutched occasionally. Her half-sister, who had not yet passed through the initiation at maturity, sprawled upon her stomach in the dwindling rays of the sun, scratching her woolly head. Beyond her two slaves were tending a fire beneath two large calabashes preparatory to the brewing of banana beer, which had, of course, to be done by the chief widow, Bakuma's half-sister's mother.

The mind of Bakuma was occupied by percepts of the charms of Zalu Zako; particularly as memorized on that afternoon by the river when the effect of the wonderful love-charm had begun to work. These memories, as sweet as they would have been to any maid, were shot with gay colors by the words of the wizard; for he had assured her that with the toe-nail and hair

to work magic upon, Zalu Zako would be bewitched by her charms for all time. And she had obtained them.

She could have gotten the goat, not a skinny goat as described under the inhibiting influence of a wild hope that the wizard would relent, but a fat one. For her cousin, smarting under the reproaches of her husband, had such a goat, fat as goats in Wongolo go, and she was eager to exchange it or anything for an infallible charm against sterility. Bakuma feared to part with the charm, yet the matter was pressing; immediately she was the wife of Zalu Zako she would be in a position to purchase all the charms in the village.

But difficult to obtain as they were—for as everybody knows no man leaves portions of himself around that may fall into the hands of an enemy to work magic upon, least of all a rich man "half-divine"—she had obtained these nail-parings and the one hair. With that charm, the only thing of value Bakuma possessed, had she bribed a concubine of Zalu Zako's household to steal the required ingredients from the hut thatch where they had been hidden after the official shaving and paring which followed the ceremony of his father, pending their removal to the sacred precincts of the temple.

Above her love for Zalu Zako was her natural feminine appreciation of a good match. The son of the Snake was even better from a woman's point of view than union with a successful wizard. In the event of the death of the king-god the wives of his successor, although denied to him,were accorded special privileges; and upon his demise these royal wives retained their home upon the hill which had become his tomb.

Moreover, as Bakuma knew well, now that Zalu Zako was heir apparent he must choose the principal wife, who would for her life remain paramount in the household, avoiding the dread of every ageing woman that her husband would take unto him another wife younger and more supple.

The one mosquito in her paradise was the fear that as soon as her uncle, her father's brother, to whom she belonged by inheritance, learned the identity of the august personage who desired her, he would raise the price to a prohibitive figure. For he was mean as well as stupid and lazy, wherefore he had few goods; and although Zalu Zako was a rich man she knew that any man save a fool loved to drive a good bargain if only to prove his astuteness. Therefore was another imperative necessity to procure every means of magic and charm to fan the flame of her lover's passion.

Yet always flashed a bright-hued lizard in the sun of her joy when she imagained herself installed as the chief's wife in the household of Zalu Zako, a position unassailable for all time as long as he had one male child; the practical mistress of his first two wives as well as the retinue of slaves.

Bazila, the youngest wife, Bakuma knew well; the favorite and haughty, covered with the most expensive charms against every ill and black magic, she was overfond of sneering at young girls of the hut thatch whose charms had not yet slain a victim.

"*Ehh!*" gasped Bakuma and flashed her teeth as she rolled the warm leaves around the sticky mess. "Then will the scent of my body be more bitter than the flower of the fish-faced cactus!"

And so through the night did Bakuma taste of anticipatory joys as she lay awake upon her reed mat on the slightly raised dais of the floor which was her bed, watching the smoke of the fire in the middle of the hut lose itself in the shadows of the roof, and listening in the hope of hearing some voice of the spirits Marufa was to invoke on her behalf.

Save for the occasional bleating of a goat and once the harsh scream of the *baroto* bird, which made her heart contract, for it is a bad omen, in some respects, the night was still. However, at the hour of the monkey Bakuma arose to replenish the fire. As the western star was melting in the warm green she left the compound. On the outskirts of the village the tall figure of M'Yalu appeared from the shadows of the plantation.

"GREETING, daughter of Bakala!" said he, his eyes greedily devouring her.

"Greeting, O Chief!" returned Bakuma as she politely stepped to one side to avoid standing on the vague shadow of the chief.

"The fawn seeks the pastures early," remarked M'Yalu.

"Before the breath of the sun the grass is sweeter," retorted Bakuma, edging away.

"Aye," remarked M'Yalu with a hungry glint in his eyes, "thou art eager to slake thy thirst? But in the valley will no buck walk this day!"

"*Ehh!*" gasped Bakuma, recollecting instantly the omen of the *baroto* bird heard that night. "What meanest thou?"

"Maybe the soul of him hath wandered and been caught in a trap or maybe—" he paused to watch her closely—"maybe an enemy hath made magic upon the parts of him."

"*Ehh!*" Bakuma started nervously.

M'Yalu smiled and touched her upon the shoulder.

"Thy flesh is cooler than the dew."

"Nay, nay, O Chief, thou hast not tied my girdle," she protested as she backed away from him, her eyes wide like a terrified deer's.

"Nay, but will I untie it soon," he retorted.

But as he stepped toward her she turned swiftly and fled. As M'Yalu watched her running as swiftly as a *pookoo* into the plantation, he grinned and called out:

"Even now is the cooling draft steaming in the breath of the Unmentionable One! But the goblet shall hold a sweeter draft for me!"

"*Aie! Aie-e!*" wailed Bakuma, her heart beating furiously. "What devil hath bewitched me? Oh, that father of many goats hath betrayed me! *Aie! Aie-e!* The cry of the *baroto* bird! *Aie! Aie-e!*"

And when Bakuma, distraught with terror by the knowledge that she had procured the nail-paring and hair to give her lover into the hands of the false magician, who, of course, had been bought by M'Yalu, arrived at the "pastures" by the river, as M'Yalu had foretold, no buck walked there.

AS THE sun shot blue shadows from the sacred hill upon the village was another scene being enacted, and it was not as imagined by the amorous M'Yalu.

In the council-house, which was within the outer fence and before the sacred enclosure, was in progress a meeting of the doctors. In the door of the enclosure squatted Kawa Kendi with Kingata Mata in attendance tending the royal fires. Before him in front of their fellows were seated Bakahenzie and Marufa in full dress of green feathers and the scarlet plume.

The left side of the idol, which was so set that the shadow never fell upon the entrance to the compound, was gilded by the sun; the mouth grinned in one corner, one eye was closed in shadow seemingly like a prodigious wink.

To the thrumming of the sacred band Bakahenzie was rocking himself to and fro and mumbling incantations. Kawa Kendi squatted immobile, but the others swayed and grunted softly in rhythm. Then on a sudden did Bakahenzie lift up his head and cry out in a great voice. The drums ceased and the body of witch-doctors remained motionless, expectant. Bakahenzie dropped his head and began to chant:

"Behold! I have heard the voice of the trees
Crying softly by night!
Lo! The soul of the plant is in labor
As a woman with child!
Behold! Is she not to break forth?
For she cries for aid?
Unless she be heard the infant will slip!
The fruit will not be!
The plants will not break!
The milk will be sour!
The beer will be green!
Women will not bear!
Our spears will be blunt!
Our magic will wane!
And he will be wroth!"

"*Eh! Ah! Eh! Ah! Eh! Ah! Eh! Ah!*" grunted the chorus of the doctors. Then chanted Marufa:

"Lo! I have slept and been that which I must!
Preying swiftly by night!
Behold! I have bloodied my fangs in the throat
Of a mighty bull eland!
Blood succored the earth and upsprang a plant
Which panted for blood!
The sap of the plant is the soul of the tree!
Take heed to the thirst
Of him who first was!
Who lusts for a maid!
Supple and bow-arched!
Clean-bloodied and strong!
Whose name is forbid!
Whose name is a sin!"

"Who hath stolen the name?" screamed Bakahenzie leaping to his feet. "Who is she that hath stolen the name?"

"*Eh! Ahh! Eh! Ahh! Eh! Ahh! Eh! Ahh! Eh! Ahh!*" grunted the chorus.

The drums throbbed swifter. Bakahenzie began to shuffle in a stooping posture with his head down as if he were snuffing a trail. To the continuous grunting he continued this dance for fully a quarter of an hour. Then stopping suddenly in front of the king he screamed:

"Let her be bidden
To come to the feast!
Let her be oiled!
Let her come dancing!
Let her be joyful!
Let her be decked!
Let her be glad!
Lips of the groom
Thirst for her mouth!
That the crops will be full!
That the cattle grow fat!
Wives will throw men!
Spear will slice foes!"

He sank suddenly upon his haunches. The drums ceased.

A slave appeared, bearing a pure-white kid. Kingata Mata took the animal and held it before Kawa Kendi who muttered a long incantation over it and cut the throat with a spear-head. Then to Marufa was the bleeding carcass carried and while it was still alive he slit open the stomach, smeared the liquid over his chest and right arm and tore out the intestines. The corpse was removed, Marufa, working only with the enchanted arm, turned the entrails over and about peering closely.

There was silence. The shadows grew in depth. From the village came an occasional bleat and the voice of a distant girl chanting.

After a prolonged and studious search Marufa caught up and wrapped 'round his neck an intestine. As he rose the group of witch-doctors broke out into a mighty groaning. Marufa speeded across the small clearing and knelt before Kawa Kendi. Through the bloody necklet he whispered two syllables—

"*Kuma.*"

The groaning ceased as suddenly as it had commenced. Kawa Kendi cried out in a loud voice—

"The bride is found!"

Instantly the drums began a furious beat, a mighty shout rose from all assembled and they fell to the chest and stomach grunting, "*Eh! Ahh! Eh! Ahh!*" as Bakahenzie and Marufa began to dance the dance of thanksgiving.

Bakuma had been doomed to be the victim for the Feast of the Harvest Festival, to be sacrificed in the orgy as the Bride of the Spirit of the Banana, because Marufa had discovered by divination that the two syllables of her name were those of the secret name which only the king-god knew, of the Unmentionable One, Usekuma.

IX

BEFORE the green tent strutted a sentry as pompously as if he were on duty before the commander's bungalow. Inside, sprawling in a camp-chair, was the corporal in blue-striped pajamas, smoking a cigaret. Upon the floor crouched one of his women with a safety-razor stuck in her woolly thatch, opening a can of beef. On the camp-table was a bottle of brandy which had had its neck knocked off, and an open tin of cigarets. Squatting on the bed was another woman in field-boots cleaning up a can of salmon with one finger. The rest of the tent was a litter of broken cases, bottles, cans and papers.

Ten yards away under the thorn shrub lay Birnier, and near to him were Mungongo and the others. Mungongo's regard shuttled between this scene in the tent and the white man with a mingled expression of terror and amazement; terror at the temerity of the corporal in treating a white in such a manner and incredulous bewilderment that the white did not immediately strike them all dead. But the others, more sophisticated in the white man's ways, were solely occupied in envying the corporal's orgy.

The mauve shadows turned to blue as they lengthened. The clouds of small flies thinned and their ranks began to be refilled by the mosquitoes. Birnier lay with his back to the tent with a fly-switch of grass, but he watched the doings of the corporal covertly. The corporal and his women had been drinking a good deal of the brandy and now he was supplying generous quantitites to his men. Once when he had come out to jeer, Birnier took no notice nor even of the kick implanted by one of his field-boots on the woman.

Already there was a savage glint in the corporal's yellow eyes and a pronounced uncertainty in his movements. Whether the man had had any particular instructions regarding the manner of his death Birnier did not know until he became loquacious and took to shouting insults at his white prisoner.

The great white chief had given the white man to him as a slave, he yelled, and now he was going to take him home with him. This idea seemed to tickle him vastly and also his women, who giggled and applauded as the corporal began to describe what obscene

acts they would make their white dog perform every day, what they would give him to eat, how he should be made to dance.

They grew noisier and the women began to sing lewd songs. The soldiers too revealed signs of their frequent potations. The whole crowd would go mad, Birnier knew, and sooner or later collapse, which would give him a chance to escape—unless they chained him, or, what was far more probable, they decided to bait him to death in an orgy.

What they would probably do to him was unthinkable. Somehow he must find a way out by self-destruction. Even should he escape he would be unarmed and without food, and there was every possibility that they would trail and overtake him in the morning. He was lame and footsore; also he was weak from want of food.

Once when despoiling his chop-boxes the corporal had contemptuously thrown him a half-eaten tin of sardines and a cigaret. Birnier let the cigaret lie. But nourishment he needed; and so after an inward struggle he had eaten the fish, having to claw them out like a monkey while the big black and his women sprawled and laughed.

The soldiers, except the one on sentry go, who still paced a trifle erratically, were grouped on their haunches around the fire in front of the tent, on the threshold of which the corporal presided with as much pomposity as if he were the great mogul. All were drinking and smoking and eating.

Now and again the women would scream insults over their heads at the white and once the corporal threw an empty bottle at him, evoking a storm of applause. They were fast becoming very drunk. The women were dancing the belly dance and crooning, while the men began the rhythmic stomach grunt, which ever leads to the hysterical exaltation.

The sun was dipping. They might come for him at any moment. He watched the sentry and contemplated making a rush, taking a chance on the man's bad aim and unsteady hand. They would not follow him far in the dark for fear of the spirits that walk by night.

The only alternative to suicide was the river, in flood and full of crocodiles, a slender chance. He determined to try it. He considered making the attempt then, but the darker the better; they would more easily miss. At any cost he must never let them get their hands upon him. He drew himself together, flexing his limbs for a leap and a rush, anxiously observing the gathering twilight and the chanting crowd around the fire.

The leashes of discipline were fraying. The sentry still plodded up and down, but with a rolling eye for his companions. The working of his mind was revealed when he walked 'round tying knots in the long grass, which, as every Munyamwbi knows, is a sure method to prevent a prisoner's escape; then he halted in front of Birnier, grinned, and pointed to the fire; evidently he knew or had heard that an orgy was coming.

The man stood and watched him. Fearful that the fellow was about to drag him over or suggest that the victim be seized if only in order to release him from his irksome duty, Birnier snatched up the cigaret lying in the grass and asked for a light to distract the man's attention. The sentry shook his head and pointed to the fire.

Hastily Birnier searched his pockets for a match; recollected that he had used the last and took out a small waterproof tin box of English vestas which he kept as a reserve in a special pouch of his belt. In the very act of striking the match Birnier ejaculated—

"God!"

"*Nini?*" demanded the sentry.

"I burned myself," returned Birnier.

"Nothing to what you will soon!" retorted the sentry and, grinning, made an obscene suggestion as he swaggered across to the fire.

BIRNIER cursed his own stupidity and thought swiftly. If Mungongo and the others ran at the same time the numbers would confuse the soldiers the more. He spoke across to Mungongo in the Wongolo dialect hoping that the Munyamezi would not understand.

"Let thy heart be like unto the bullet of my big gun, and obey me! When I throw up in the air this cigaret thou shalt run and plunge into the river, but not into the depth; lie hidden in the reeds of the bank until thou shalt hear a frog croak thrice and then once. Come out and go to the frog, and be not afraid for thou shalt see me in the spirit form. Dost understand?"

"*Ehh!* Truly, my Master!"

"Tell the Shenzies that they also obey or will my spirit eat them up as it shall these children of dung!"

"Truly, Master!"

Birnier glanced at the horizon. The shadows had melted into the violet twilight which in equatorial Africa is almost as short as the snuffing of a candle. The stars were popping out. Dusky forms were circling 'round the yellow of the fire, which threw pale flickers on the figure of Corporal Inyira and revealed the beginning of the hysteric gleam in the yellows of his eyes as, reverting to habit, he squatted on his haunches in the chair. They might make a rush for the victims at any moment. The sentry, excitement overcoming discipline, was, rifle still in hand, dancing 'round the outskirts of the throng.

Birnier threw the cigaret toward Mungongo. As he dived around the thorn bush he heard the rustle of movement and the boy's gasped exclamation to the others. The bank of the river was not fifteen yards away. On the brink Birnier crouched and listened. He heard a splash a little to the right, which was Mungongo or one of the others literally obeying his instructions.

The mosquitoes buzzed and stung in clouds. A cricket shrilled persistently above the chorus of the frogs and the throb of the hand drum and the chanting. The sentry had not yet discovered the flight; he was probably drunker than Birnier had guessed. By raising himself on his hands he could see the gleam of the fire and the inverted V of the tent through the scrub.

He hesitated whether to begin operations immediately or wait until after they had discovered the flight and were further intoxicated. Yet the excitement of the loss of the prisoner might sober them a little, Birnier reflected.

No, it did not matter even if they were completely sober. The spirits of the night were perhaps more real to them than when they were drugged by alcohol. Yet he would wait, for they might come as far as the river with lanterns and should he be compelled to take to the water invaluable material would be wasted. Almost had he begun to curse them for being so slow when a rifle cracked and a bullet hummed over his head.

He slid hastily down the bank, thinking for a moment that he had been spotted. But it must have been just a random shot. The chanting ceased. A hoarse shout from he sentry was echoed by uproar from the others.

Birnier crawled up the bank cautiously and peered. He could not see well, for one eye was nearly closed by mosquito bites, but he could make out vague forms passing and repassing across the glow of the fire. Lights began to glimmer. Amid shouts and yells figures began to advance toward the river. He crawled down the slope.

Whether the water was deep or shallow he could not tell; only he could make out in the glimmer of the stars the dark patch of reeds or bushes for some yards. He slid in as noiselessly as possible, although the pursuers were making noise enough to scare all the spirits in Africa. He sank to his chest, standing on stones, and waded out a little. He buried his head and shoulders behind a half-submerged bush, and remained still.

For some time he could only hear the shouts and yells. He kept the water up to his chin and continuously splashed his face in the endeavor to slacken the efforts of the mosquitoes. The cries approached. He saw figures outlined against the stars and then some gleams of lanterns. Something stirred ponderously near to him. It might be a crocodile, but he dared not move. The figures against the stars seemed to stay on top of the bank for hours. He remained rigid, expecting a swirl of water and teeth.

Suddenly a spurt of flame shot out above him and was followed by a fusillade of shots in the direction of up-river. Had they spotted Mungongo or were they merely letting drive at a bush or the spirits in general? The last was most probable. The water swirled near to him. All his will-power was required not to leap frantically for the bank.

Yet a crocodile would be far more merciful than those black devils. Again a swirl and something passed close to him at high speed. Probably an otter scared by the firing; at any rate it was not a crocodile. The lights and figures on the bank disappeared.

Shots rang out again, and were followed by a wild outburst of yelling. Cautiously Birnier began to wade for the bank, continually splashing water at the mosquitoes, which were so thick that they reminded him of the Bayou Lafourche in far-off Louisiana.

Crouching, he waited on the edge of the bank to listen. The corporal might have

had enough sense to post men in the grass. Yet he might be too fuddled to think of that and no native would willingly stay there in the dark unless under white discipline. Voices still muttered but they sounded as if from the camp. Had they given him up for the night relying on the chance that if he had not been taken by a crocodile they could trail him in the morning? Probably.

Birnier squatted there half in the water ready to plunge back, until he was sure they were in camp. Then as cautiously he crawled up the bank. Through the scrub he could make out the figures around the yellow of the fire, which had gone down considerably.

Now what would they do? He could hear the mumble of the corporal's voice. Would they be sufficiently sobered to turn in, ready for the chase in the morning? Birnier did not think so, with that case of brandy there; the corporal would not at all events. There was a sudden scream of pain and the chatter of women's voices.

Was the corporal punishing the sentry for having let the prisoners escape or were they beginning to fight among themselves? The latter was improbable, as native non-commissioned officers are usually chosen from petty chiefs and the men under them, as far as possible, from their own village. Had they captured Mungongo or one of the others? Birnier listened again. Another scream was stoppered to a groan.

"DEVILS" muttered Birnier.

Lying flat to watch the grass and shrubtops against the stars, he gave the frog croaks, arranged at intervals of ten seconds. About five minutes later he saw some grass-tops quiver unnaturally. He croaked again. Came a whisper:

"Is it thou, Infunyana (Golden-Mouth)?"

The name had been given him because of his gold fillings.

"Aye."

A dark form glided toward him.

"Where are the other men?"

"I know not. I told them as thou hadst told me to do. When thou didst give the sign I fled and plunged into the river."

"Thou wast not frightened of the crocodiles?"

"Nay; for I have a mighty charm against all river beasts enchanted by Bakahenzie, the greatest magician."

"*Ehh!*" commented Birnier contorting his swollen lips in the dark. "Would that I had the such a one! Thinkest thou that the men did as they were bidden?"

"Who knows what is in the heart of a goat?" returned Mungongo contemptuously, for they were of another tribe.

"Ah, listen!"

The mutter of the hand drum grew swifter as they broke out a high tenor chant to the accompaniment of the pneumonic grunting and the shrilling of the women:

"We have come from afar from the place of the waters!
From the place where dwells the mighty Eater-of-Men!
Hard was the road as the hills of Kilimanjaro!
Hot was the sun as the wrath of Inyira the bold!
The son of Banyala!"
Chorus: "*Ough! Ough!*
E-eeeeh!"

"But strong are we still as the trunk of an elephant!
For have we not walked in the shade of a great chief!
Blacker and fiercer than the male rhinoceros!
Swifter and more terrible than the mother of whelps!
The son of Banyala!"
Chorus: "*Ough! Ough!*
E-eeeeh!"

"What hath he given us to tickle our spears?
A dainty white dog whose meat is so tender!
Fattened and groomed by the Eater-of-Men!
A gift from the great chief to his ally and friend!
The son of Banyala!"
Chorus: "*Ough! Ough!*
E-eeeeh!"

"We will tickle his white flesh with the tongue of our spears!
Our women will pluck out his hair and his toe-nails!
He shall dance to our liking in the midst of the fire!
His girl-screams for mercy shall lave hungry ears of
The son of Banyala!"
Chorus: "*Ough! Ough!*
E-eeeeh!"

"Great was the gift of the great Eater-of-Men!
A white slave so sleek to dance the dance of the ants!
Eh! We'll slit up his nostrils and pull out his hairs!
A white slave and four black ones to wait on our great chief!
The son of Banyala!"
Chorus: "*Ough! Ough!*
E-eeeeh!"

"Those children of folly have not obeyed," whispered Birnier. "The time is come! Wait thou here for me, O Mungongo. I go to take my spirit form. When I return be not afraid!"

"Truly," answered Mungongo as Birnier crawled way and down the bank.

By the water's edge he swiftly stripped

himself to his boots and taking out the wax vestas damped each precious one and carefully rubbed lines over his face and body, endeavoring to get the most distinctive phosphorescent effect around the eyes. Leaving his clothes he crawled back to Mungongo.

"*Ehhh!*" exclaimed Mungongo in a muffled scream when he saw the glowing apparition.

Birnier heard the rustle of grass. As the boy stood up to run he leaped and pulled him down savagely.

"Be quiet, thou fool!" he whispered. "It is I. Be silent!"

"*Eh! Eh!*" gasped Mungongo who was trembling violently.

"If thou dost not be quiet will I tie up thy heart," threatened Birnier.

Mungongo continued to quiver, but he remained passive.

"*Eh! Eh!*" he gasped. "Truly thou art a more mighty magician than Bakahenzie!"

"Be quiet!"

The drums and the song were still going and the chant had become more obscene than ever.

"Follow me!" whispered Birnier when Mungongo was more reassured.

They made a detour. As they grew near they could hear muffled screams and groans beneath the howl of the chorus and song. The mighty son of Banyala and his merry men were so engrossed in the orgy that Birnier could have walked right up to the fire before any one would have seen him. But he was not taking any chances.

Leaving Mungongo outside, he crawled under the back flap of the tent. Crouched there he paused to take stock. The tent was empty; for all were engaged in the dance. His two shotguns and two light rifles were stacked in the corner, and the big express which the corporal had appropriated leaned against the tent-door behind the chair.

He glanced hurriedly around for ammunition, but he could not see any open and he had, of course, left his belt of cartridges behind. Outside the men and women were circling in contrary directions, each with a spear, a knife or a firebrand in hand, 'round the fire beside which, trussed like a bundle of fagots, were the four servants, their feet singeing on the outside hot ashes.

For a second Birnier hesitated. He could not know whether any of the guns was loaded. The fire was a mass of glowing embers which did not throw too much light into the tent. Swiftly Birnier rose and glided into his own chair in the deep shadow of the tent-flap. Then summoning all his nerve he uttered a yell and began to roar the first song which he could recollect.

"Hurrah! Huraahhhhh! It is the jubileeeee!
Hurrah! Hurrah! The flag that set you free!"

The native minstrel stopped in the middle of his chant; the whole shuffling, grunting crowd was petrified in as many different poses. Birnier leaped to his feet waving his arms wildly, yelling:

"Thus we sang the chor-uss from Atlanta to the Seaaa!
As we——"

But before he had gotten to "Georgia" only the prostrate forms around the fire had not fled.

X

ON THE morning of Birnier's departure there was much movement in Ingonya station. Every sign of preparation for the expedition had been carefully concealed while there was a stranger in the vicinity. Trumpets blared importantly. On the great parade-ground companies were formed in long lines of rigid ebon figures down which strolled zu Pfeiffer inspecting personally kits and rifles.

Afterward the troops were drawn up before the flagpole. In an address zu Pfeiffer informed them that they served under a greater *Bwana* than he, the greatest *Bwana* in the countries of the white or the black, who was the son of Ngai—an uncertain term meaning "son of God" and the "son of nobody;" that the flag which they bore, the brother of the big one upon the pole, was so powerful in magic that none could withstand it, the totem of the Bwana Mkubwa Kuba; and that he had sent them upon a war expedition to take a country which they knew was full of ivory, cattle and women.

The row upon row of eyes in rigid black faces twittered with excitement as from the mass came the long drawn grunt of assent and allegiance. The three white sergeants barked at their various companies, which wheeled into column formation and marched

past zu Pfeiffer beneath the flag in review order, their lines and precision a credit to their drill-masters.

Down below the fort on the mouth of the bayou Sergeant Ludwig superintended the overhauling of the little steam-barge, and a native sergeant and a file of men overseered lines of carriers bearing white men's provisions, the bulk of which was zu Pfeiffer's personal supplies. Around the launch was a flotilla of native canoes in charge of a small crowd of nude Kavirondo paddlers, jabbering excitedly at the prospect of a war expedition.

Most of the day zu Pfeiffer spent in the orderly room going over documents and giving detailed instruction to the grizzled Sergeant Schneider, who was to take over the station with fifty of the least competent men, pending the arrival of an officer, which again would depend upon the success of the expedition.

In zu Pfeiffer's manner was evident the controlled excitement of a boy on the eve of an interstate game, and indeed for him it was the game for which he was bred and lived—*das Kriegspiel*. Perpetually his long fingers caressed the sentry mustaches; an unusual glitter was in his blue eyes.

The personality of Birnier had been apparently wiped from his mind as a spoor in the sand by rain: indeed in addition to the competing excitement of the expedition the previous night's alcoholic and sentimental debauch had served to exhaust the emotions stimulated by jealousy. To him had appeared an obstruction in his emotional life in the shape of the husband of the woman whom he adored, therefore, according to his nature and training, he had endeavored to remove that obstruction as swiftly and as efficiently as possible.

Superlative confidence in himself, reflected in his pride of family and nationality, the apotheosis of which was the Kaiser, enabled him to devote all his energies to the business in hand, never doubting that his interpretation of native psychology would ensure the extinction of his adversary.

Beyond the mere joy of the game of war was present the fundamental impulse to win the approval of the All Highest by gaining another place in the sun as well as the half-suppressed conviction that such a distinction would naturally further his suit in love. In the orbit of these two poles revolved the life actions of zu Pfeiffer.

That evening zu Pfeiffer dined leisurely and as sumptuously as usual; drank his port and smoked his cigar while his servants packed the last of his kitchen battery. Then at the first green of the moon he gave the order to march.

The three companies of *askaris* fell in, marched down to the bayou and embarked without fuss or confusion, each group under a non-commissioned officer to the appointed canoe.

The launch labored busily out of the bayou past misty reed-girt islands into the indolent waters of the great lake, dragging after her the fleet of forty-odd canoes. A cigar under the awning of the tiny poop looked like a great firefly in the blue shadows where lounged zu Pfeiffer with his favorite brandy and seltzer at his elbow.

Like some enormous water-fowl leading a strange black brood the flotilla continued through the night. A war-chant pulsed like a fevered heart as the moon upon her back lazily chased the stars into the dawn upon her way to her home in the Mountains of the Moon, to be in turn extinguished by a furious sun. And all that day while incandescent heat tried to boil illimitable waters the strange fowl waddled on with her noxious brood.

Huddled in the cramped canoes, the soldiers slept and snuffed and sang, to which zu Pfeiffer contentedly listened beneath the awning. Three times gray walls of falling water enveloped them, sending frantic black hands to bailing. Once more the moon made the skies to laugh. When the sun had played his part of a flaming Nemesis, a fringe grew upon the horizon like the stubble upon a white man's chin.

Zu Pfeiffer had calculated to arrive at the village of Timballa just within the river at sundown.

THEIR head man came down to the strand to meet them. Immediately he was seized and the soldiers, as joyous and as mischievous as children released from school, surrounded the village.

Sitting in full uniform upon the poop of the launch with the two sergeants, zu Pfeiffer held a *shauri* and demanded enough paddlers to man his forty canoes. The head man, to whom all white men were alike, thought they were British and hastened to proffer his services, promising that the *Bwana* should have the men within two days.

Zu Pfeiffer curtly ordered him to procure them before the sun was overhead on the next day; and, to insure that he was obeyed, retained him as hostage and forbade any man to pass his line of pickets around the village.

The old man protested that they had not sufficient men in the village, but zu Pfeiffer's spies had afforded him practically correct information. He gave the head man the right to send a number of messengers, accompanied by a soldier, to the surrounding villages and promised him fifty lashes and to raze his village if the paddlers were not forthcoming.

Solely because he wished to give his men time to recover from their stiffness did he not insist upon starting that night upon the river trip. As a good commander, he considered his men from every point of view of efficiency. They loved him, for he was a warrior chief as they understood such to be. Carefully he fostered their warrior pride; never were they ordered to work at menial offices, to fetch or to carry, only to drill and to fight; his punishments were ferocious, but he gave them *carte blanche* in pillage and rapine. "*Eh!* But the Eater-of-Men was a mighty chief!" And of his name they boasted to every man.

With foresight he had demanded twice as many men as he needed, knowing that the panic-stricken chief would round up the halt, the blind, and the sick. By an hour after the stipulated time they were assembled in the village, a motley crew. Those of the most powerful physique he selected to man the soldiers' canoes, and the next in competency he allotted to the baggage-canoes.

They started immediately. They made about two and a half miles an hour, for although the river was swollen it was sluggish and slow-streamed, tortuous. Each canoe-load of soldiery was made responsible for the paddlers and for the speed set by zu Pfeiffer in a large canoe with Sakamata as guide, under his personal observation. Never had those paddlers driven canoes so speedily and persistently.

At sundown they halted in a convenient bend where there was no village near; pickets were set on the bank and no one was allowed to land, no lights and no talking. They were ordered to rest.

At the first glint of the moon they began again. The canoes were hauled by the aid of the soldiers over the smooth rapids which divided the river into pools in the dry season. Throughout the night the misty forest and swamp slipped by to the perpetual rhythm of the paddles.

About the hour of the monkey a hippopotamus charged the flotilla and upset two boats. Zu Pfeiffer forbade any shooting nor would he permit the expedition a moment's delay to pick up the occupants. Just as they heard the distant crowing of cocks from the village for which they were bound, four paddlers collapsed.

The soldiers, acting on their own initiative, threw them overboard to swim if they could and took the paddles themselves. Afterward they were thrashed for disobedience of orders in having given a possible chance for one of the men to warn the Wongolo.

At an hour after sunrise they arrived at the village. The majority of the paddlers were so exhausted that they dropped in the canoes and had to be thrown ashore where they lay inert, their backs scored with the urgent bayonet-pricks, caking in the hot sun.

Beyond this point the river was not navigable, but the village was upon the Wongolo border and within two days or fifteen hours' continuous march of Mfunya Mpopo's—as zu Pfeiffer knew it—zu Pfeiffer adopted the same tactics to procure porters. But to the chief, in case he should require his services again, he gave an extravagant present and left bales of cloth for the carriers upon their return.

Zu Pfeiffer and Sergeant Ludwig traveled in *machillas*—hammocks—each with a crew of six; the soldiers carried nothing save their rifles, double cartridge-belts, and a day's rations; the pick of the carriers bore ammunition and the two Nordenfelts and two pom-poms—a most demoralizing gun—slung upon poles, and the chop-boxes; the men's blankets and the heavy stuff were to follow more slowly under Sergeant Schultz and fifty men. The country between this village and Mfunya Mpopo's was mostly forest and very sparely inhabited, which afforded some shade and concealment, and lessened the risk of a warning being given.

The expedition started at noon. The carriers were kept on the native shuffling lope by the aid of attentions from the *askaris*. Two unfortunate small villages which lay on the line of march route were surrounded and the inhabitants massacred. Twenty

carriers collapsed; they were bayonetted to prevent any chance of a successful ruse in escaping to give the alarm, and their loads given to relay men brought for that purpose. They halted at sundown. The men ate their rations, but the carriers were too exhausted to eat; they drank water and lay prostrate. According to Sakamata they were within two hand's breadths of the moon of Kawa Kendi's.

In full uniform of white, girded with his sword and revolver, zu Pfeiffer ate, drank and smoked cigars until the forest roof was patterned against the cold pallor of the moon. Then, after giving final instructions to Sergeant Ludwig and the various native non-commissioned officers, he ordered the excited, jabbering men to march, with the carriers staggering on at the point of the bayonet.

XI

THE doom pronounced by the council of witch-doctors was to Bakuma and all concerned, as a bull of excommunication in Spain. M'Yalu was the one who exhibited the most emotion, for had he not paid five tusks of good ivory to have the object of his passion placed under the most terrible tabu and doom of death?

Against Marufa, who had seemingly betrayed him, was his anger directed, but great as was the rage of M'Yalu it was tempered with fear. One had not only to kill an enemy but also to appease his justly wrathful ghost, and who knew what the disembodied spirit of the most powerful magician in the land save Bakahenzie could do?

Moreover, no other wizard would give him absolution in the form of the magic of purification. A chief though he be, he dared not slay a magician. But he did seek Marufa and found him as usual squatting on his threshold, contemplating infinity in a mud wall. He saluted Marufa politely, choking back words of bitter recrimination, for if he even offended him the wizard might cast a spell upon him instantly.

Marufa returned the greeting as courteously as ever and when at length M'Yalu reproachfully reminded him of the five tusks which he had paid apparently to secure his love's terrible fate, Marufa replied uninterestedly—

"I have done that for which thou hast paid."

"What man buyeth a bride for another?" retorted M'Yalu.

"When I did make magic upon 'the things' did I place in the power of the spirits the owner. Behold! Hath not the owner of 'the things' been accursed?"

"*Ehh!*" gasped M'Yalu. "But how may that be? Didst thou not thyself take the paring and the hair?"

"I bade the one who is tabued bring them that he might be bewitched to her girdle. She thought to deceive me by bringing that which was of herself."

"*E—eh!*" muttered M'Yalu, impressed at the awful effect of deceiving a wizard.

Marufa continued to stare. M'Yalu pondered thoughtfully.

"But the tusks," murmured M'Yalu at length dismally.

"It is not I who have two tongues," responded Marufa uninterestedly.

And with that M'Yalu had to rest content. Marufa indeed had no interest at all in the love of Zalu Zako, M'Yalu or Bakuma; it had merely happened that the time had come for the witch-doctors to choose the victim for the Harvest Festival: Bakuma was young and good-looking, a dainty morsel that would please the taste of the officiating doctors; her owner and uncle was a man of no importance; so accordingly he had made known the sin of her name through the divination.

In the solitude of his own hut upon the hill Zalu Zako sat and pondered sulkily. His young and fierce temper was stimulated and the seed of rebellion against the domination of the priesthood was quickened by the fate of his new love; although the masonic secrets of the craft were denied to him, he, as son of the royal house, was suspicious of the powers of the Unmentionable One and the priesthood as many an one had been before him; yet in spite of that the verdict was absolute, for he was too crushed by terror of the consequences to permit of any hope of annulling it.

The fiat not only doomed Bakuma to a terrible death at the third blooming of the moon, but from that very instant the tabu came into force; for being thus accursed by the possession of two sounds of the sacred name she was deemed unholy. Her half-sisters, and their mother, with whom Bakuma shared the hut, fled to another, and

were exorcised by the wizard, which, as everybody knows, is an expensive ceremony; gourds and pots, spoons and utensils of all sorts were left to the sole use of the unclean one and would be burned upon her demise.

A magic line was drawn around the hut out of which the soul of the girl as she slept could not escape to bewitch anybody. Neither her name nor anything that had been hers would be ever mentioned again; any word of household articles or any thing or beast which had one sound or syllable of the name "kuma" was changed to some other word, lest the user be accursed and bewitched.

For the whole day in this isolation sat the girl Bakuma, Marufa's useless love-charm clutched in her hand, as bewildered as if the earth had suddenly turned inside out under this fact so stupendous and stupifying. She did not weep. She squatted in the door, her eyes staring with the glazed, mutely-inquiring expression of a dying gazelle, a bronze question to Fate.

At the feeding-time her mother threw her bananas into the circle. Bakuma looked at them as they flopped near to her as if she did not realize what they were. She made no stir to cook or prepare them. The cool twilight came and passed like a blue breath. The myriad chorus of the night began beneath the crystal stars.

From M'Koffo's hill came the faint thrumming of a drum and the sound of music and dancing reminded Bakuma of her ambitious dreams. She could neither weep nor wail; she merely emitted a faint gasping sound. But her mind began to work jerkily, yet more fluently. Visions of the form of Zalu Zako were weaved and spun in the darkness; the lithe walk of him, the haughty carriage of the head. Slowly greened the sky until the banana fronds were etched in sepia against the swollen moon. The dismal croak of the *baroto* bird shattered the black cocoon of Bakuma's mind.

"*Aie-eee!* The foul bird of my despair!" she wailed at last and wept.

THEN she rose and flitted like some green ghost into the plantation and across to the place of water where her lover had first spoken her sweet, recking naught in her mist of despair of spirits of the night or of the breaking of the magic circle. And as the moon spattered the squatted form with blue spangles and turned the falling tears to quivering opals, Bakuma broke into wild lament:

"The Black Goat hath cried three times in my hut!
My soul hath wandered and been caught in a trap!
Aieeeeeeeeeee!

"A wizard hath stolen a hair from my head!
The beak of Baroto pecketh my gall!
Aieeeeeeeeeee!

"A rival hath lain in wait for my love!
She hath slain my bird in the nest of his breast!
Aieeeeeeeeeee!

"A porcupine hath taken the place of my heart!
The bird of my soul is fluttering faint!
Aieeeeeeeeeee!

"An ember of fire hath entered my mouth!
The milk of my breasts is curdled tonight!
Aieeeeeeeeeee!

"A monkey hath bitten the back of my tongue!
Hath stolen my breath to make magic by night!
Aieeeeeeeeeee!

"My blood is sour porridge inside my veins!
My throat is choked like the *sudd* on the lake!
Aieeeeeeeeeee!

"A gray forest-rat hath swallowed my heart!
My thighs have been scratched by a poisonous thorn!
Aieeeeeeeeeee!"

As the last quiver of the wail blended with the insectile anthem of the forest came from a figure squatted above the ford of the river, his spear a blue flame in the moonlight, an answer:

"My love hath been taken by a greater than I!
Her flesh will be tasted by a hungrier mouth!
Her flesh which is sweeter than honey and wine!
Her flesh which is softer than a newly born-kid!
Ough! My spear is bent!"

Then answered Bakuma's wail—
"*Aieeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!*"

"My love hath been taken by a greater than I!
Her eyes will be touched by longer fingers than mine!
Her eyes which are like unto moons veiled by the rain!
Her eyes which are like the starlit river at dawn!
Ough! My spear is bent!"

"*Aieeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!*"

"My love hath been taken by a greater than I!
Her scent will be drunk by nostrils broader than mine!
Her scent which is pungent and sweet like the smoke!
Her scent which slakes thirst more than the driest of beer!
Ough! My spear is bent!"

"Aieeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!"

"My love hath been taken by a greater than I!
Her breath will be sipped by a thirstier throat!
Her breath which is hotter than the flame of a fire!
Her breath which makes more drunken than enemies' blood!
Ough! My spear is bent!"

"Aieeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!"

"My love hath been taken by a greater than I!
Her voice will be heard by ears mightier than mine!
Her voice which is like unto burbling beer!
Her voice which is softer than the rustle of fronds!
Ough! My spear is bent!"

"Aieeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!"

A slight breeze stirred gently the trees. The crickets shrilled their perpetual chorus. A crocodile flopped in the river. From the distance came the furious yapping of dogs from a village down the river. Again Bakuma lifted up her voice:

"Mightier than elephants was the tread of my man!
Keener than a leopard was the flash of his eye!
Stronger than an oak-tree was the strength of his arm!
Swifter than lightning was the stroke of his spear!
Enemies died!

"Taller than the *waie* palm was the height of my man!
Broader than the temple was the span of his chest!
More graceful than antelope was the carriage of him!
More slender than saplings was the build of his legs!
Women lamented!

"Sweeter than warm honey was the scent of my man!
Whiter than a spear flash was the gleam of his teeth!
Fiercer than scorpions was the grip of his hand!
Smooth and like stone was——"

A shower of yells and shots destroyed the song of Bakuma like a foot crushing a flower.

Zalu Zako leaped to his feet and stood for a moment listening intently. Across the river some strange beast spat continual spears of red flame, a little farther down the river another beast coughed violently, like a hippopotamus. The sky seemed falling. Such volumes of sound he had never heard before.

As he raced with the speed of a koodoo through the plantation he saw the glow of fire ahead and heard the moan of some terrible monster near him. He leaped five feet in the air as the world appeared to crack in half beside him. He felt a sting like a brand of fire in his shoulder and his arm swung uselessly, but he ran on toward the village, from whence fled dim figures on all sides amid shouts and screams and wailing.

Several huts were already blazing. The monster coughed and moaned again and once more the earth seemed to crash to pieces near him. Appalled and bewildered, choking with rage, he reached the outer enclosure, where a mob of his fellow warriors were shouting and screaming that the white gods were attacking. Bakahenzie, gun in hand, was bidding them charge at they knew not what.

Then out of the clutter of the village broke line upon line of yelling figures clothed in uniform. Screaming the battle-cry, the warriors charged, led by Zalu Zako, Bakahenzie, and Kawa Kendi, who in the excitement had dashed from the enclosure. Howls and yells were drowned in the spiteful crackle and cough. Warriors were mown down like weeds under a hoe. Of those who took part in the sally scarce a hundred scrambled inside the enclosure at the rallying call from Bakahenzie.

Again came a short rush of those uniformed figures; again red spears pierced the green moonlight like a hail-storm; small red flames rippled in a line like a forest-fire as the soldiers charged through and over the palisade. Hand to hand was the fighting, spear and sword against bayonet and rifle around the idol, the *askaris* outyelling the warriors. The temple was on fire. In the light of the flames they saw a tall figure in white with a glow of fire in his mouth and magic eyes upon his hands, eyes which flashed rays of scarlet and blue as he cut and hacked at the base of the idol.

"Tarum hath come!" screamed some one, and as the cry was taken up the Unmentionable One tottered and crashed to the ground.

They fled, Zalu Zako, Bakahenzi and those that were left.

XII

THE village of Yagonyana the son of Zahilazaan was situated some five days march to the northwest of Kawa Kendi's in open cattle country near the fringe of the forest. Here were gathered nearly every witch-doctor and warrior of the tribe. Most of the women, children, and slaves had been sent still farther to the west, driving the cattle before them.

Bakahenzie, Zalu Zako, Marufa, and all those warriors who had escaped from the massacre by zu Pfeiffer, were distinguished

from their brethren by circles of yellow earth around each left eye, and each right breast and arm was smeared with red; which is of course part of the ceremony of magic purification for those who have slain, lest, as is well known, the ghosts of the dead wreak their wrath upon their slayers.

The affairs of the tribe were in a parlous state. The netting of the tabu had been so tangled by the death of the king, Kawa Kendi, whose body had not been recovered to enable the doctors to release his unhappy souls and might be used to make magic more magic against the tribe, and by the unprecedented act of the overthrow of the idol, that none could unravel a single strand.

For three weeks there had been much discussion among the doctors, the chiefs, and the people. Opinions were hopelessly at variance; no two men could agree. Lesser wizards, who before had been content with the perquisites of the smaller offices, were now made drunken by the insecurity of Bakahenzie's position.

Each of the doctors, seeing a chance to prove his superior merit and win Bakahenzie's post as chief doctor, had busily made magic to destroy the usurper and each and every one provided a different reason for the failure thereof. For every day came further news of the doings of the white god with eyes upon his hands, of shootings and floggings, of the burning of the village, including the idol, the temple, and the sacred tombs of Mfunya Mpopo, of M'Koffo, of Mzrakombinyana, and others before them.

The council of the craft could not even decide whether Zalu Zako was to be king-god or not. Bakahenzie, whose interest lay in supporting the dynasty of the royal family, maintained that he should be anointed forthwith. But with the downfall of the idol and his own inability to make successful magic his prestige had been badly shaken; no longer dared he issue dicta autocratically.

As ever, personal political ambition tore patriotism to shreds. Yabolo, relative of Sakamata, zu Pfeiffer's spy, immediately demanded to know how Zalu Zako could be anointed when there was no opportunity to prove his strength to bear the burden by carrying the idol?

M'Yalu seized the opportunity to support Bakahenzie, hoping that Zalu Zako would be shut up in the godhood and therefore be lost to Bakuma. Yabolo, who had with him a powerful faction of the disgruntled ones and those who temperamentally sought the line of least resistance, countered by arguing that Eyes-in-the-hands must indeed be a powerful god, else would not the sky have fallen upon them at the downfall of the Unmentionable One? And quickly noting the effect produced by this argument, he declared that they should submit and seek the protection of the new god.

Marufa, former close ally of Bakahenzie, but lacking his active principle, continued to mutter incantations most impressively by himself, waiting cautiously to see which side of the river the arrow fell. Bakahenzie became seriously alarmed at the growth of Yabolo's faction and the indifference of Marufa.

He knew well that submission would entail the loss of his post as well as his worldly goods; and he was aware that all men knew his most potent and strenuous magic had failed as utterly as that of the youngest apprentice in the craft. His only chance to retrieve a portion of his lost reputation was to invent a more plausible excuse for failure than any other doctor had done.

He did. Although he did not know that Bakuma had broken the magic circle of her own volition he had the shrewd imagination to suggest that she had either fled with the other women during the attack or that even if she had stayed the *askaris* would have taken her from the hut. Therefore did he demand an assembly of the craft and chiefs.

One of the reasons, if not the principle reason, of Bakahenzie's success as of other witch-doctors before, like Savonarola, had been a faculty, inspired by or derived from hysteroepilepsy, of working himself up at will into a state of convulsion without actual loss of consciousness and the spectacular exhibition of foam which no other witch-doctor had been able to simulate so successfully.

Therefore Bakahenzie invoked the great Tarum—the apotheosis of ancestors' spirits—who, through the convulsed body, did proclaim that the disaster had been caused by the breaking of the magic circle by one whose name was accursed; and that only could the magic of Bakahenzie be made potent and the consequent overthrow of the Eyes-in-the-hands be assured by the sacrifice of the victim to her destiny as the Bride of the Banana.

MARUFA, appreciating the shrewdness of this move, immediately abandoned his incantations to resume his allegiance to the cause of Bakahenzie, for the prophecy was hailed by nearly every one as a most timely excuse for the failure of magic in general. The miraculous recall of the Unmentionable One now seemed so easy of accomplishment through the person of Bakuma that many of those who had sided with Yabolo deserted him, foreseeing the renewed ascendancy of Bakahenzie and fearing his wrath.

Yabolo, however, made an attempt to recover the lost adherents by protesting that the moon of the Harvest Festival had not yet come and that therefore victory could not be obtained until two more moons had waned. Marufa, now close partisan of Bakahenzie once more, declared that the voice of Tarum must be obeyed; that clearly he had meant that triumph should be theirs as soon as the marriage feast had been accomplished.

Zalu Zako, sitting at the head of the chiefs, gravely assented, for although he still harbored resentment against the dictum of the god, the accusation against Bakuma made no difference; it never occurred to him that the fate of Bakuma could ever be diverted any more than his own doom to celibacy as king-god.

But to M'Yalu the matter appeared in a different light. Suddenly he saw that by submitting to the new god he might be able to have removed the tabu upon Bakuma—all things were possible to one who had overthrown the Unmentionable One—and thus obtain her by the price of submission; also he might possibly recover his wealth of ivory, which he abandoned after the massacre; therefore did he, with his people, go over to the Yabolo faction.

Uproar and confusion ensued. Bakahenzie recovered from his trance with unprecedented rapidity and even did not require to be told what the spirit of Tarum had said through his lips. The tribe was split into fiercer factions than ever. They argued and screamed and cursed. But there was no authority. Yabolo and his adherents profited by the excitement; he promised each and every one positions and wealth under the new conqueror.

Bakahenzie had lost the hold over them, for as the god of which he was the sponsor was dead his credit had gone too. He dared no longer to remove a troublesome brother or chief by magic. He saw clearly that if he waited until Bakuma was found Yabolo's influence might have prevailed; that his only hope was to restore the god; so to that end he declared that Zalu Zako must be anointed king-god. Uproar arose once more. But Bakahenzie's purpose had been served; he had diverted them from the subject of submission.

All day and the next waged the futile war of opinions. Bakahenzie, shorn of his autocratic power, waxed furious. Zalu Zako was the least concerned. Squatting silently on the threshold of the hut of the village chief, Yagonyana, he watched the rainstorms sail from the west every afternoon and listened indifferently to the babel.

From time to time came terrified runners with horrific stories of the burning of villages, of massacre and rapine.

Bakahenzie, determined to prevent submission, secretly sent by a slave to Eyes-in-the-hands an arrow, which is a sign of war; Yabolo, whose mind ran in the same tracks, also sent a banana, which is a sign of peace. In the meantime factions grew and multiplied. One chief wanted his followers to take their cattle and women and seek to conquer a tribe to the southwest; another wished to go west.

But each and every follower began to bargain with his chief for disproportionate rewards for service. Two chiefs and five hundred men started to the southwest, but they returned because they met in their path the skeleton of a slain elephant, which is, as everybody knows, a sure sign of disaster.

Bakahenzie sent runners far and wide to discover Bakuma, but as she could not be found he concluded that she had been killed or taken as a slave and urged the warriors to fight. Zalu Zako immediately desired the anointing to be delayed in order that he should not be debarred from fighting. Bakahenzie, none too sure of his authority, was compelled to acquiesce.

Marufa, observing that the arrow was still in the air, took to his non-committal incantations again. Bakahenzie strove to keep the warriors and chiefs occupied by dissension until the result of his challenge to battle should mature. Yabolo, equally perturbed for his influence, did exactly the same with the banana in view.

Yabolo and M'Yalu contemplated going in to make submission, but the former

wished to negotiate through Sakamata for the best terms, although he urged M'Yalu to go; but M'Yalu was suspicious and would not without Yabolo.

But at the hour of the monkey one morning came a terrified shepherd crying news that cut the tangled threads of their intrigues as a sword cuts a goat's throat. The white god Eyes-in-the-hands was within an arrow flight of the village of Yagonyana.

Consternation and uproar ensued. The village and the temporary camp of grass huts buzzed and hummed. Zalu Zako dashed out, sword and spear in hand, and in the glow of the awakened fires harangued the warriors, urging that they make a swift detour through the forest and attack the white man as he entered the village.

Bakahenzie supported this plan of campaign. M'Yalu, stung by the recollection of the loss of many tusks to the invader, incontinently abandoned Yabolo and frantically urged a frontal attack. Yabolo consistently demanded that they send an envoy to make terms, but not very insistently, for, in spite of the assurance of Sakamata, he was suspicious of the new god's gentle ways. Marufa, the wise, collected those of his household who had remained with him, and quietly made his way to the forest.

But Zalu Zako's martial spirit was drowned in the clamor of those who would flee before worse befell, crying that the white god, Eyes-in-the-hands, would eat them all up as he had others with the terrible monsters who coughed flames and death; others screamed th the uniformed devils were spirits of the night and therefore invincible for always they came in the dark. So they wavered and hesitated, shouted and argued.

Then came a scout, screaming that the enemy was upon them. He was followed by a vicious cough and a pom-pom shell landed in the midst of the crowded village.

Zalu Zako, Bakahenzie, and their small following were nearly swept away in the rush of five thousand-odd warriors in flight.

From the forest they watched with awe-struck eyes the burning of the village.

XIII

ON THE morning on which zu Pfeiffer burned the village of Yagonyana Birnier was encamped upon the southern boundary of Wongolo. By his *coup de superstition* he had recovered all his equipment except several bottles of brandy, some canned goods, and two and a half pairs of pajamas. The noble Inyira, son of Banyala, and his merry men never attempted to recover their prisoners; no one save the Eater-of-men in person could have persuaded them to return to that camp even had they had their rifles.

After he had dressed his own foot and the charred feet of his men, and had had a good drink and a better meal, he had sought to address the balance of his mind through a medium designed for the cure of melancholy, but efficacious for many other ills, "The Anatomy of Melancholy."

He opened the one big volume, which had been his companion throughout his travels, at a page marked at haphazard by an ivory paper-knife, a slender disk with the American flag upon the flat hilt, an early gift from Lucille, and began to read the remarks of Robert Burton of quaintly glorious memory upon the source of his late adventure.

"Those which are jealous, most part, if they be not otherwise relieved, proceed from suspicion to hatred, from hatred to frenzy, madness, injury, murder, and despair. Amestris, Xerxes's wife, because she found her husband's cloak in Masista's house . . . . flayed her and cut off her ears, lips, tongue, and slit the nose of Artaynta, her daughter."

"Cheerful lady!" commented Birnier. "She ought to have been zu Pfeiffer's wife!"

From a long sleep Birnier rose feeling rational enough to reconsider his position. The recollection of the signature on the photograph now failed to stimulate an emotional reaction as once it had done; for the experience through which he had passed had had a beneficial effect in breaking or disconnecting the train of suggestive images.

At first in the recess of his mind had lurked the desire to abandon everything, to rush straight to Lucille to demand an explanation. Now in the rising sun of reason the incident cast quite different shadows. The high light was the fact that should he do so he would be sacrificing his mission for what might prove to be ridiculous. As his mind contemplated the subject the echo of "*à toi*, Lucille," tended to carry a high note, but this he suppressed by writing a long letter to Lucille recounting the facts and frankly admitting that he had been sufficiently insane with jealousy to "go up in the air."

Once or twice he ceased to write and gazed anxiously into the glare as his imagination suggested the long period of waiting for an answer, and wondering whether the echo of that cursed *"à toi"* might not become unbearably shrill.

He became a little more sentimental toward the end of the letter, remarking that perhaps he had been wrong in deserting her for so long and emphasizing the rather ridiculous point that he was aware that he was not a young man. However he let it go and at the first opportunity sent off the letter by runner to the nearest station in Uganda together with an order for certain goods to be sent to a village on the Wongolo border.

Although still inclined to be emotional over the photograph, Birnier did not waste any energy over thoughts of revenge upon zu Pfeiffer, whom he philosophically regarded as irresponsible for his actions, inasmuch as he had been made that way, just as any savage. He had gotten out of the toils set for him, so why should he spend time and trouble in seeking revenge which would merely consist in reporting the incident through a British station to Washington, who would open up interminable polite correspondence with the German embassy, who would again write prodigious letters to the colonial minister in Berlin who would . . . .

Ludicrous! No, he would not permit zu Pfeiffer to interfere with his plans. He would continue straight to Wongolo instead of investigating the Kivu country, where zu Pfeiffer might perhaps have another opportunity to cause more trouble.

Accordingly he had negotiated with the nearest village for carriers and set out striking due southwest, thus approaching the Wongolo territory from the southward.

The people to the south of the Wongolo country was an inferior race whom the Wongolo periodically raided to replenish their slaves. These Wamongo were split up into several petty chiefdoms usually at war with one another.

They had no defined theology, for they had not progressed beyond the stage of magic as far as any concept of religion—that is, of praying for intercession to any power greater than themselves; whereas the mental state of the Wongolo was half-way between magic and religion, mixing and confusing the two, as exemplified in the rain-making ceremony of employing magic and alternately praising the god and threatening him with dire penalties if he did not behave.

There seemed to be no royal family clan of the Wamongo; chiefs changed constantly as one more powerful for the moment arose; the wizards did not appear to have any political power, acting as general physicians and confining their efforts apparently to simple magic for the growing of corn, the curing of the evil eye and wounds.

They were terrified of the Wongolo, much to Mungongo's delight, who never let slip an opportunity of swaggering and bruiting abroad the fame of his master as the greatest of magicians the world had ever seen. Never was he tired of relating to a grunting audience the terrible sight and effect of his master's transposition into a spirit. The story lost nothing in the telling.

Progress was slow. Every afternoon, as regular as the sun set, clouds of sepia sailed up from the west to clothe the world in a gray deluge of falling water. Fortunately they were traveling up a watershed, so there were no large rivers to cross. As they approached the Wongolo border rumors began of a white god with eyes upon his hands and live fire in his mouth, who, so said the delighted Wamongo, had entirely eaten up the hated Wongolo.

They seemed prepared to accept Birnier, when suggesting that he should make magic for them to conquer the Wongolo, as another terrible white god and were accordingly polite. But Mungongo, vastly indignant, furiously denied the story. According to him no power on earth could have subdued his race, except, perhaps the mighty Moon-Spirit, which was the name he had bestowed upon Birnier.

BUT when Birnier arrived at the first village of the Wongolo the absence of warriors corroborated the wild stories they had heard. The whole of the inhabitants of old men, boys, and women, surrounded the camp to gaze in awestruck curiosity at the white whom they believed to be the brother of Eyes-in-the-hands.

This calumny Mungongo strenuously denied and anew related the marvelous feats of magic of Moon-Spirit, who would, he assured his compatriots, eat up Eyes-in-the-hands as easily as a crocodile would swallow a goat.

Yet in spite of their terror they insisted

that Birnier must go through the ceremony of purification incumbent upon all strangers in order to exorcise the evil influence of their eyes and souls: also the customary present must be sent to the king and his august permission to enter be awaited although no man knew where he was since the capital had been burned. Mungongo waxed furious.

He informed them that Moon-Spirit was a friend of the son of the Snake, and moreover had before been in the country; that if they vexed Moon-Spirit he would enchant the whole village so that no man could move hand or foot. No matter, said they, that was the rule and must be done. They were impressed but obstinate.

From the description of this destroying god who was the color of a stripped banana and tall as a palm tree, fire in his mouth and eyes upon his hands—it was some time before he could recognize the "eyes"—and whose companions were devils strangely clothed dragging horrific monsters who spat earthquakes, Birnier had no difficulty in recognizing zu Pfeiffer and recollected the significant pumping at dinner regarding the Wongolo country.

Although he had renounced any idea of revenge the discovery of friend zu Pfeiffer as the terrifying god amused him; quickened a desire to overset the gentleman's plans. He smiled with a slight hardening of the line about his mouth as he began to consider what might be done.

As far as he could estimate by recalling the size of the native barracks at Fort Ingonya he reckoned that zu Pfeiffer could not possibly have more than three hundred men, unless he had been reinforced from the east.

Roughly he calculated that the Wongolo ought to be able to put about ten thousand warriors in the field. That number, under any sort of leadership, even though they were only armed with spears and swords, should wipe out the three hundred in spite of the discipline and two or three machine-guns, by sheer weight of numbers.

But, from what he had already heard, zu Pfeiffer had evidently caught them unprepared, wiped out a mass and secured a supernatural effect by destroying the idol. He remembered his talk on folk-lore and his comment that zu Pfeiffer was unusually well-informed upon the psychology of the native mind.

During two days of arguing in the native manner news came in of fresh massacres adding to the general terror. He sent for the head man, and with him held a long *shauri*, with the result that the old fellow conceived the wonderful idea, already suggested by his lesser brethren, of enlisting the services of this white man, reputed to be a most marvelous magician, in their protection.

Then, having had his wits sharpened by his own originality and a sheath-knife, the head man promptly discovered that the ceremony of exorcism could not be performed because the local wizard had departed with every ounce of magic for the front. Still there were obstinate and fearful persons who wished that Birnier send a message to the king and wait until he had the permission. Another two days were lost until this objection was overcome by certain presents of *bafta*, destined for the king, being handed over to the village.

On the week's march across Wongolo Mungongo triumphantly held spellbound audiences at every village through which they passed. As they neared the site of the City of the Snake, where they heard zu Pfeiffer was encamped, they encountered deserted villages. When they came upon the smoldering embers of one Birnier consented to turn aside from the regular trail in order to pas to the west of Kawa Kendi's where, so the natives said, were Zalu Zako and Bakahenzie.

Beyond a belt of forest was open rolling country. They came to a tiny village of five huts where dwelt some herdsmen, although most of the cattle had been driven westward. Mungongo, seeking at Birnier's suggestion for some one who had actually been present at the village when zu Pfeiffer attacked, discovered a young girl who had escaped.

He brought the daughter of Bakala into the presence of Moon-Spirit, still pathetically clutching the amulet which Marufa had given her. But from Bakuma, who had fled to the forest at the attack and afterward to this herdsmen's village where the fact of the tabu would not have penetrated, Birnier could interpret little of value. Of the whereabouts of Zalu Zako she knew no more than the peasants.

She remembered Golden-Mouth, as he had then been called on his previous visit to the City of the Snake, and to her it seemed that a god had descended from the blue sky personally to aid her. So utterly incompre-

prehensible and terrifying had the attack appeared that unconsciously the inevitability of her doom was shaken; if such things could happen, she felt rather than thought, then who could say what else was not possible?

She asked permission to travel with Moon-Spirit. Birnier, who knew from her dress, or lack of it, that she was unmarried, smiled as he wondered whether she were seeking her lover.

THROUGHOUT their journey they had not met a single warrior; but as they neared the Place of the King they began to meet bunches of them. At the sight of the first head-dress Bakuma bolted into the grass, nor did she reappear until after they had gone. Later she came to Birnier and asked permission to hide within his tent when the warriors appeared and to his question began to explain the fate to which she had been doomed.

Naturally this account of the marriage of the Bride of the Banana at the Harvest Festival was of value as well as of interest to Birnier professionally, from whom it had been concealed when in the country before. He cross-questioned her and made notes; but Bakuma could give him practically no details of what actually happened, a secret well-guarded by the craft.

They looked downcast, these warriors, and were doubtful what to do on meeting another white. Many had never before seen a white man and were inclined to bestow upon Moon-Spirit all the attributes which they had given to Eyes-in-the-hands.

"*Eh!*" said they. "Eyes-in-the-hands was a more powerful god than the Unmentionable One, for had he not eaten him up? Eyes-in-the-hands had imprisoned the thunder and the lightning in a bag which he loosed at will. Who could withstand him? Had they better not submit before his wrath had eaten them all up? *E-eh!* Man can not fight with a god, as any fool knows."

They were returning to their homes to make pilgrimage to the new god, to propitiate him with oxen and with ivory, lest worse befall. However, they knew where Zalu Zako was hidden, he and his wizards whose magic was as a drop of water in a fire. Mungongo did not fail to relate the marvels of Moon-Spirit which he had seen with his own eyes, he and those with him.

The warriors listened without being in the least impressed. That, said they, was merely woman's magic to what Eyes-in-the-hands could do. *Aiee!* Had not they fallen dead in masses at the cough of one of his great monster spirits! *Aie-e!* Had not the look of him burned up the Unmentionable One as a straw in a fire? Therefore was he not greater than the god? *Aie-e!* was he not burning their villages at will? *Aie*, brothers! They must hasten to appease the wrath of so terrible a god.

Birnier saw that it was useless to attempt to argue with them. Zu Pfeiffer with his shrewd stroke at the kernel of their faith in the idol had established a kind of godhood; and by his ferocious massacres had thoroughly cowed them. However, Birnier secured one man to guide him to where Zalu Zako, witch-doctors, and those who remained with him, were in hiding.

On the fringe of the dense forest they camped. The warrior guide went to acquaint Zalu Zako of their approach, else otherwise the sight of a white might provoke an attempt at massacre or flight. On the third day the man returned bearing greetings from Zalu Zako personally who remembered well Golden-Mouth, the only white man whom he had ever met.

For two days, on a faint trail in a steamy heat pulsing with chromatic birds and lizards, they journeyed through the forest, the skirts of the vast Ituri, whose deepest recess is the home of the pygmy. One early forenoon they were halted by the warrior in an apparently trackless jungle and bidden to camp.

Mungongo was indignant, but protest was useless as the man refused to guide them any further, saying that Zalu Zako would come to them. So the carriers cut a circle and built a zareba and the messenger was swallowed by the green wall bearing presents of two rifles.

TO BE CONTINUED

JAY BIRD'S JUDGMENT

by W. C. Tuttle

Author of "How Paradise Lost," "For the Parson of Paradise," etc.

"You may sing of brave sailors
Who sail bounding mains
On waters where hurricanes blow,
But I take more chances whenever I climb
On the deck of a bucking bronco."

CHUCK WARNER slapped the dust off his chaps and rubbed his hip. He took a few tentative steps and grimaced with pain.

"Darn fool cayuse!" he exclaimed. "Ain't got a lick of sense! Better round up that mail or it will blow plum to Canada. Darn them 'Shepherd's Bibles' anyway!"

He limped around through the sagebrush until he was satisfied that the Cross J mail was all in his possession once more. He looked them over until he came to a certain letter.

"Some folks ain't got enough spit to seal a letter proper," he informed himself. "Now ain't that a slovenly way to fix a letter for shipment? Sealed just enough so a feller has to open her all up in order to seal her right. Maybe I better look and see if anything got lost out."

All of which seemed a conscientious way to read somebody else's letters. Chuck had been to Paradise after the mail, and had complained bitterly on having to carry six heavy mail-order catalogs back with him.

"Shepherd's Bibles!" grunted Chuck. "Everything from rat-poison to railroads, and me riding a bad animal."

"Maybe the old man can find a cook in one," suggested Paddy Morse, the postmaster. "He ought to get married, Chuck. He sure can afford a wife."

"Yeah," admitted Chuck, leaning against the counter, and wiggling his flexible ears. "Give me some tobacco, Paddy. The old man would sure make a husband for some good girl, and it might not spoil the cooking at the ranch. The covers of these here Bibles says that their distribution is wide, and I'm betting they will be before I get home."

Old Doc Milliken wandered over to the rack, where Chuck was tying the offending literature to his saddle, and grinned at Chuck when the roan bronco tried to straddle the rack.

"Starting a library, Chuck?" asked Doc, standing at a safe distance.

"Hello, Doc," grunted Chuck. "How's all the little pills?"

"Tolable. How's the old man feeling these days?"

"Ailing," panted Chuck, bracing his shoulder against the horse, and yanking the string tight. "Old 'Jay Bird' Whittaker is pining away, Doc. He's cooking for the outfit, 'cause he can't get a cook, an our stummicks are in the sere and yaller leaf. Let's me and you have a drink. I like to drink with a doctor, 'cause then you sort of feels that you're follering the lead of a man who ought to know whether it's bad for the human system or not."

"I'm a veterinary, Chuck," grinned Doc, accepting the invitation.

"No matter," grinned Chuck, "I wiggle my ears—you notice."

"Do you really think he's pining away for a female cook?" asked Doc.

He accented the word cook. Chuck poured out a drink and scratched his head.

"Any special female that you know of, Doc?" he asked.

"Suitable one, I reckon," grinned Doc. "He could afford one."

"Yeah," nodded Chuck, thoughtfully. "Yeah."

Chuck rode toward home, slouched in his saddle, as he tried to conjure up the kind of a woman for J. B., when the offensive catalogs broke their moorings, dropped into the dust with a loud *splat* and were the cause of Chuck being set on foot a mile from the Cross J.

He sat down on a convenient boulder, and perused the open letter. It was from a man in Great Falls, and after the superscription: "Dear old J. B.," it was terse and to the point:

> No cooks. Advise marriage. Who are you going to leave your money to when you die? Pick a good cook, and yell for a preacher. Very truly yours.

"That's the third time today," grunted Chuck, sealing the letter. "Three times is a charm," and he started for the ranch, cursing high heels and mail-order catalogs.

> "Rode all his life in a four-wheeled rig,
> Pailed the cows and slopped the pig.
> Thought one day he'd go out West,
> Of all the punchers he'd be the best.
> Bought some chaps and a wall-eyed bronc
> Looked like an actor from a honkatonk.
> Went to town on a Summer's day,
> Rode his bronc like a bale of hay.
> The bronc crow-hopped a couple of lines
> And the Rube came home full of cactus spines."

Sang Muley Bowles, from the top-pole of the corral beating time with his fat hands on his knees.

"What's the matter, dear heart? Bronc lose a wheel?"

"Naw!" grunted Chuck. "Trying physical torture. Bronc come home?"

"Sure did," yelped a voice, and "Telescope" Tolliver, the longest puncher in Yellow Rock County, stuck his face over the corral top. "Had the saddle under his belly, and both feet in the stirrups. Had to cut that cinch to let him loose. Any mail?"

"Two letters for the old man, and a package for each one of you. I piled them beside the road after I got dumped. I don't know what's in 'em. I ain't in the habit of opening mail, if anybody asks you. Right—down—beside—the—road—where—the—trail—cuts—to—Pole-Cat—Perkins'—place! Want me to draw you a map?"

Chuck wiggled his ears, and plodded off up to the ranch-house. The old man was not in sight, but the rattle of dishes in the kitchen proclaimed his presence.

"Couple of letters for you, J. B.," yelled Chuck.

The old man came in, his face a combination of flour and soot, and supreme disgust.

"This one must be from a lady," opined Chuck.

The old man turned the letter over in his hands, and grunted:

"Lady ——! From the looks of that flap, it must be from a coal-miner. Wish I had a cook. Just made bread, and the only way it will ever raise is to use dynamite instead of yeast."

The old man read the letter, and scowled at the ceiling. Then he opened the other, which was a legal-looking document. He read it part way through, put the other letter in his mouth, and puffed thoughtfully on it. Chuck lit a match, and held it to one corner of the letter, and it burned half-way up before the old man saw it. He spit it out, and stared at Chuck.

"Did you hear what Muley said about your cooking?" asked Chuck.

"No," whispered the old man, absently. "Nope."

"Went like this:

> "He greased his pans with coal-oil
> And put liniment in the stew
> His coffee tastes like alkali
> And his beans are full of glue.
> His bread shows streaks of iron rust,
> His ——"

"Muley!" yelped the old man. "Muley be——! Gol dingle dang!"

"Of course it ain't none of my business, old-timer," observed Chuck, "but if I was you I'd get married."

Whittaker stared at Chuck for a moment, and then:

"I'd give a thousand dollars if I was! There's that blasted bread burning up!"

And he raced for the kitchen, leaving Chuck dumbfounded.

"Thousand dollars!" whispered Chuck. "Twenty-five months' salary. Mama!"

HE WANDERED down to the bunk-house, and began strumming on Hen Peck's banjo. Muley and Telescope came in, unconcerned-like, proceeded to surround Chuck, and then to administer chastisement with a quirt.

Chuck managed to squirm loose, and stood at bay on top of a bunk, with the banjo as a weapon of defense.

"Keep away or I'll fill you both full of discords!" he yelped. "I didn't lie to you, did I? Wasn't the packages there? Listen to words of comfort and good cheer, you cannibals: the old man is going to get married."

"Yeah?" chirped Telescope. "Chuck, ain't you got no sense at all? Why didn't you tell us that he wasn't and we'd dress for the wedding? As the champion blockhead liar of the world——"

"All right, he ain't then," said Chuck, in an injured voice, and began tuning up the banjo.

"Why tell us a lie like that?" inquired Muley, sadly. "What do you reckon old Ananias would say if he heard his pupil talk that away?"

"I'm a liar," admitted Chuck cheerfully. "Let her go as she lies."

Muley and Telescope shook their heads, sadly, but the seed was sown, and it was only a few minutes later that Telescope asked:

"Was that letter from her, Chuck?"

"I ain't feeding no pearls to hogs," declared Chuck with finality.

"You're among friends," stated Telescope.

"Not a word. If anybody says that I mentioned it I'll swear that they lied. *Sabe?*" And he went on playing discords.

The next morning Chuck went up to the house to see if the old man wanted anything in town, and he found him humped over in a chair, reading that legal-looking letter, of the day before. He grunted at Chuck, and put the letter back into the envelope.

"Chuck, a woman is a queer critter, ain't she?" he mused.

"Not when you *sabe* them like I do."

"Don't slam the door as you go out, Mister Warner. Where'd you learn to lie like that?"

"I ain't lying," defended Chuck. "There's plenty to learn about women but nobody ever finds it out. One would be a great comfort and cheer to you, old-timer."

"Don't slam the door," repeated the old man, and went back into another room.

Chuck went down to the corral, climbed to the top rail, and rolled a cigaret. Chuck always smoked innumerable cigarets and wiggled his ears when pondering a weighty subject. He had perfect control of his ear muscles, the trusting eyes of a child, and utter disregard for the truth. His legs were far too short for his huge body, and the wide Texas chaps made him look shorter and wider than he really was. He fumbled with his buckskin chin-strap, and nodded solemnly to a pinto in the shade of the high fence.

"One thousand dollars," he repeated aloud. "Ye gods and small fish! I'll get Ricky Henderson to do it, 'cause he writes good. Mine looks like I was trying to vent a bunch of brands. I may be unjustly branded as a liar but it will sure improve the culinary end of this ranch. Reckon I'll let Hen Peck in on it, 'cause Hen's as big a liar as I am."

Henry Peck wasn't a hard person to explain things to, and he nodded solemnly when Chuck broke the news to him.

"Thousand dollars! Gee gosh, Chuck! That's a lot of money to give for a wife. Go ahead, old-timer. I'm one of the best little lookers-on you mostly ever seen. I ain't fool-proof, so I don't monkey with the fair sex. You know what happened to John Alden when he went huntin' a squaw for Miles Standish? Well, I'm a innocent bystander, Chuck, 'cause the old man might fall for one of the Mudgett sisters, and then where'd old man Peck's little offspring be, eh?"

"You come down with me anyway, Hen," pleaded Chuck. "You help me talk it into Ricky's hard head, will you?"

"I'll help that much, Chuck."

Ricky Henderson was sprawled in his lone barber-chair, trying to hone an edge on a decrepit razor, when they dropped their reins out in front.

"Howdy, cow-trailers," he greeted them lazily. "Want a mass-age today?"

"You shaved me so close a week ago, Ricky, that I have to swab my mouth out with hair restorer every day to try and drive 'em out the right way," laughed Chuck.

"Holee Moses!" yelped Hen, looking at a picture over the mirror. "Who sent you that, Ricky?"

"I should hope to find out," grunted Ricky disgustedly. "Some female, I'd bet."

The picture in question was a cheap lithograph caricature of a barber shaving a pig, and underneath these lines:

Your razors all pull
And your scissors are broke.
As a barber, you boob,
You are surely a joke.

"Valentine," explained Ricky. "Got it today. Believe me, I'm sure taking no chances on who sent it. I may make some folks sore as a boil, but I'll hit the female what sent it, 'cause I'm sure going to scatter 'em far and wide."

"You write a good hand, Ricky," observed Chuck, rolling a cigaret one-handed. "We got a little scheme. Listen." And then he proceeded to outline it to Ricky, who nodded and grinned.

"Fine!" he applauded. "Do I know all the cooks around here? Well, I'd kiss a Kiowa. I'll write a note to each one, and mail 'em as you tell me to. We'll sure land somebody. Do you think he'd stand for paying a good salary while they're cooking? I won't go so far as to sign the old man's name, but I will use his initials, J. B. W. How's that strike you?"

"I'll buy a drink—that's how it strikes me," grinned Chuck.

Chuck and Hen spent the night in Paradise. The next day Chuck wandered down to the bunk-house, where Muley was deep in the mysteries of a game of solitaire.

"Shepherd!" hissed Chuck, mussing the layout. "Where is Telescope?"

"I don't know. Found a bride for the old man yet?"

"Who put you wise?" asked Chuck.

"Aw, don't get sore," advised Muley, grinning. "We've got the old man's interests as much at heart as you have. Me and Telescope both feels for him, Chuck."

"This is my matrimonial bureau!" snapped Chuck. "You and that long-complected cross between a peanut and a pelican will just about jinx the whole system I've worked up. Can't a feller do nothing except work around here without having a volunteer crew working behind his back?"

"Matrimony be darned!" grunted Muley. "I ain't losing no sleep over love's young dream—I'm hungry! My insides clamor for cooked food."

Just then the old man came into the bunk-house, and sat down to watch the game.

"Muley," he asks, after the cards are dealt, "Muley, have I been—uh—acting natural lately?"

"Never did," replied Muley, uninterestedly.

"What seems to ail you?" inquired Chuck.

"Well," the old man scratched his head, foolishly, "well, a while ago that female cook from the Triangle shows up with all her plunder, and moves in on me. I asked her what she meant, and gol dingle dang it, she winked at me!"

"She's a good cook," observed Chuck, wiggling his ears.

"Maybe Johnny Myers made you a present of her," suggested Muley. "Never kick a gift cook in the face."

"Gift ——!" snorted the old man. "Myers was paying her fifty a month, and she quit him to cook for me at seventy-five."

"Business-woman," observed Chuck.

"Business ——! Said I wrote and made her the offer!"

"Well, don't yell your head off about it then," advised Muley. "Stick to your written word, J. B."

The old man muttered to himself, and ambled back to the house. Hen came home in time to partake of the best feed the Cross J outfit had eaten in weeks. Annie Schmidt surely could cook. Chuck and Hen grinned across the table at each other, and after the meal they shook hands on the results.

"Ricky made a bulls-eye the first shot," chuckled Hen. "Some feed!"

"See anything of Telescope?" asked Chuck, but Hen shook his head.

"Nope. I'm betting he went down to Silver Bend with that bunch that went to see that opery show."

"Show down there?" asked Muley, flopping down beside them.

"Uh-huh! 'Mickydoo'! Lot of females in tights. You ought to see them bills."

"Huh!" grunted Chuck. "Let me tell you what I seen once when I was in New York."

"Go ahead and lie, Chuck," grinned Muley. "What did you see in New York?"

"I seen a feller what was just as fat as you are, Muley. He looked a lot like you, but he had brains, which spoiled the resemblance."

THE next morning Chuck was sitting on top of the corral, trying to teach Muley how to spin a rope, when the old man came down and climbed up on the fence. He waited until Muley

stopped to untangle his legs from a rope, and then remarked, softly—

"Chuck, I must be sick."

"Well, if you must it's o.k. with me," replied Chuck. "But why insist?"

"I—I've been doing things I ain't got no recollecton of."

"Meaning which, J. B.?"

The old man motioned back toward the house, and slid closer to Chuck.

"A little while ago that Swede cook from the Seven A shows up, and moves into the house. She—she orates that I'm paying her seventy-five a month."

Chuck wiggled his ears at Muley, and nodded.

"You must be sick, old-timer. Hundred and fifty to run the kitchen. Why for that money you could hire a French chef and have patty defoy grass."

"Another female?"

"Naw! Patty is something to eat."

"——!" snorted the old man. "Who wants to eat grass that's got a middle name? Loco-weed suits me."

"What are you going to do?" asked Muley.

"Do? I can't do a thing. She says I wrote to her, and made the offer."

The old man wandered down to the barn, while Muley did a few waltz steps, and recited:

"He never had a decent meal in all his blasted life.
He hires two expensive cooks to choose one for a wife.
He must have been a little mixed the day he sent the screed,
'Cause it's mighty hard to chose between a Dutchman and a Swede."

A little later on Doc Milliken rode in, and went up to the ranch-house. When he left there he met Chuck.

"Been up to see the old man," stated Doc, as he untied his mount. "Old man sure acts queer, Chuck. Wanted to talk about women. When a man wants to talk about women, he's getting serious."

"Yeah," agreed Chuck, "I reckon he's serious all right."

Chuck wandered on up to the house, and found the old man sitting out on the back steps, puffing away on an empty pipe, and staring off into space. Chuck sat down beside him, and they both seemed deep in thought, when the back door opened and a voice announced:

"Please, Mister Vittaker, a gentleman is inside for you."

"What did she say?" grunted the old man.

"Your skee-jumping stew-artist said there was a gentleman inside for you," replied Chuck.

"Please," repeated the voice of Hulda Hansen. "He vishes you, Mister Vittaker."

"Better go in," advised Chuck. "You're being wished for."

The old man grunted, and went into the house. Chuck smoked up his cigaret, and started for the bunk-house. When he was half-way down there he heard a crash, a few expressive cuss-words, and two men, locked in each others arms, fell off the porch into the dust.

A couple of dogs danced around the two, barking with joy, while a cloud of dust arose from the field of battle. In the angle of the house stood a rain barrel, half-full of water, and the fight terminated when one of the disheveled figures doubled the other like a jack-knife, and dumped him into the barrel.

The other limped wrathfully past Chuck, and toward a horse tied at the corner of the corral.

"Howdy, Wick," greeted Chuck. "How you feeling this fine day?"

Wick Smith turned and spat viciously.

"Fine ——!" he snapped, and went on down to his horse, and rode away.

Chuck walked up and helped the old man out of the barel.

"What seemed to be ailing Wick?" he asked, dumping the barrel over.

"Ailing?" The old man shook himself like an old dog. "Ailing? Chuck, I don't blame him—gol dingle dang me if I do! I sent his wife a letter, asking her to cook for me, and stating matrimony as the main consideration."

The old man shook himself and went into the house. Chuck took a deep breath, and started for the barn.

"I'm going to kill Ricky!" he muttered. "I sure am!"

He saddled his horse and raced all the way to Paradise. Ricky took one look at Chuck's face, as he came in, and dropped his razor.

"Ricky, you—say, what did you send all them letters for?"

"Letters? Why I never sent but one, Chuck. One to Annie Schmidt."

"Sure?"

"Hope to die. Here's the rest."

Ricky opened his desk, and handed Chuck a bunch of envelopes.

Chuck grunted, and glanced at them before he put them in his pocket.

"What seems to be the matter, Chuck?" asked Ricky, anxiously.

"Darn me if I know, Ricky. I reckon Muley and Telescope must have got too enthusiastic. I'll keep these letters, Ricky, and I can prove that me and Hen are innocent if it comes to a show-down."

When Hen came in that afternoon he found Chuck playing solitaire in the bunk-house. He flopped down and fanned his face with his hat.

"Chuck," he blurted, "somebody's playing the joker wild around here!"

"Uh-huh," grunted Chuck, "mis-deals and frosted decks, too, if any body asks you. What happened to you?"

"Well," Hen cleared a place on the table for his feet, "well, I was coming past the Mudgett place a while ago, and Annie Mudgett came out and yelled at me. Showed me a letter, and wanted to know if it was on the square. Letter from our beloved boss."

"Read it?" asked Chuck.

"Uh-huh." Hen clapped his hands, and assumed an angelic expression.

"Dear Miss: You have attracted me for some time, but I have been too bashful to set up with you. I reckon I can make you happy and feed you thrice a day. I don't want nobody to *sabe* the state of my feelings, so I'm offering you seventy-five a month to cook for me. Yours very affectionately and truly ——"

"My ——!" yelped Chuck. "Jay Bird Whittaker, Pasha of Paradise!"

"At seventy-five dollars per month for each inmate," nodded Hen seriously. "Let's go and kill Ricky."

"Muley or Telescope," corrected Chuck, and then he told about his visit to Ricky.

Hen listened and shook his head, and just then the old man came down and leaned disconsolately against the door.

"Why don't you cheer up?" asked Chuck.

"With the asylum staring me in the face?" wailed the old man.

"Asylums ain't so awful bad," sonsoled Hen. "You won't have to cook. Where do you figure you're headed towards, Warm Springs?"

"Got three cooks!" he wailed, counting on his finger. "T-h-r-e-e-!"

"Three cooks is a crowd in a kitchen," agreed Chuck, wiggling his ears. "Who is the third one?"

"Widder Saunders! Gol A'mighty! Said she was of the same mind as me."

"Nothing like harmony," nodded Hen, and the old man went back to the house, cursing like a mule-skinner.

Telescope and Muley failed to show up that night, and the old man occupied their bunk.

"Can't sleep up at the house," he stated, sadly. "It can't be did. Them females are occupying all the beds, and you never can tell when they'll start a war. They ain't speaking—they ain't, and they sure look at me like a hungry coyote sizing up a sick calf. Dang it all, I—I ain't so much afraid of an asylum as I was. Maybe, if I don't get too crazy, I'll sell out my cows and go in for sheep."

THE next morning, before the occupants of the bunk-house were awake, somebody knocked loudly on the door, and Chuck yelled sleepily—

"Come in!"

The door opened, and there stood Abe Mudgett.

Be it known that Abe Mudgett was born with a cross-grained disposition, and acquired more ability than judgment with a gun. He leaned against the doorway and considered the sleepy face of J. B. Whittaker, protruding from under a blanket.

"Whittaker, you wrote a letter to my sister."

His remark was more of a statement than a question. The old man blinked rapidly a few times and moistened his lips. He tried to speak, and nodded weakly.

"You're on the square in this are you?" asked Abe, and the old man clucked deep in his dry throat.

"She's up at the house," stated Abe. "I just wanted to know if you was on the square. Shake hands with your prospective brother-in-law. Annie will make you a good wife."

The old man got up, wobbled across the room and shook hands with Abe. He tried to put his feet through the sleeves of his coat, but they wouldn't go, so he sat down on the bunk and put on his hat. Abe rolled a cigaret and slapped the old man on the back.

"Me and you are going to shake up this here place, brother-in-law," he declared. "You been running things slack lately. See you later."

The old man threw his hat over into the corner and picked up his belt and gun. He ran his fingers over the filled loops of the belt and then:

"——!" It was more of a prayer than profanity. "I wish I hadn't traded off that .38. A .44 hops too much for a feller what ain't got a strong grip."

He slipped on a pair of pants and boots, and walked outside. He stopped on the step, seemed to look down the road, and then stumbled back inside.

"Look!" he whistled weakly. "Coming!"

Henry and Chuck stepped outside and glanced down the road. Coming up to the bunk-house is old Runs-With-A-Wolf, a Piegan warrior, and a gaily-dressed squaw. The squaw was resplendent in a yellow and vermilion blanket, and her hair was greased until it shone in the rising sun. They stopped at the door, and the old buck grinned from ear to ear, as old Whittaker peeked around the corner of the doorway.

"*Klahowya*," greeted the old warrior. "Me catchum talking paper. Good! My klooch too much belong to me. *Sabe?* Me brungum young klooch. Good cook. You betchum life!"

"Even the reservation wasn't sacred," said Chuck, in a far-away voice.

"Love is like a Shepherd's Bible—it has a wide circulation."

"I—I—" The old man choked and teetered back and forth on his feet. "I—oh —!" And he weaved toward the house with the pair of aborigines trailing behind.

Chuck and Hen stared at each other and then went back to finish dressing. Chuck swore softly over a tight boot and Hen nodded agreement. They were just putting on their belts when Muley came in, grinning, and dumped his saddle into a corner. Chuck and Hen merely glanced at him, as he sat down on a bunk, and grinned over a letter.

"Got a letter from Telescope," he announced. "Listen to this:

"The opery troupe busted up in Silver Bend, and I've got a mate for the old man. Her name is Evangeline Van Dyke. We're both broke. Send me ten dollars. If she don't suit I'll get her a job slinging hash. She looks fine by lamplight. Tell Chuck and Hen to stop worrying, 'cause this settles the cat-hop."

"You sent him the money?" asked Hen, and Muley nodded.

"Uh-huh. He's too late though, 'cause I've brought that new hasher from Paradise to apply for the position. She'll make a hit with the old man. Leave it to little Muley to furnish the goods."

Muley shut the door, and Chuck stared at the ceiling dazedly, while Hen got up and walked to the door and gazed toward the house.

"Chuck, come here and have a look!" exclaimed Hen.

Chuck walked over and gazed toward the house. The front porch was filled with the gentle sex, and from the attitudes there was a coldness between each and every one.

"Gee gosh!" gasped Chuck. "Poor old Jay Bird!"

"Howdy, boys," greeted a voice, and they turned to see Doc Milliken, riding up.

He climbed off his horse and squinted at the ranch-house.

"Remember what you mentioned to me one day, Doc?" asked Chuck. "About the old man getting a wife? See what your prescription done?"

"Golly!" Doc looked at the riot of color on the porch, and then: "I never knew he was a Mormon, Chuck. I'll congratulate him."

Doc walked up the path, but turned and went around to the back door. Chuck and Hen leaned carelessly against the doorway, and Chuck even essayed to whistle a funeral march, when they heard a whoop and a crash and the kitchen window, sash and all, came out along with Doc Milliken. Doc sprawled on the ground for an instant, shook the casing loose from his neck, and galloped toward his horse. Without a backward glance he jumped into the saddle, ignoring stirrups, and skidded his mount around the corner of the barn.

A second after Doc disappeared around the corner, old man Whittaker limped out of the kitchen door, with a rifle in his hands. He looked all around and then plodded down to the bunk-house, where he peered around the corner and then shook his head sadly.

"Out of range?" queried Chuck, and the old man nodded.

"Wrong diagnosis?" asked Hen.

"Gol dang him, he makes fun of misfortune!" wailed the old man. "He came in there and he says—'Morning, Elder!'

I'd love to kill a horse-doctor. How in thunder am I ever going to get rid of them women?"

"You might ask Muley," suggested Chuck. "He's up there in the house, looking for your opinion."

"Muley, eh? I'll try anything a few times," and he trotted up to the house, and brushed past the women.

"I'm going to go away pretty soon, Henry," said Chuck solemnly. "This is getting too much for—look!"

Muley Bowles' fat body slams through the crowd, crashed against the railing of the porch, which gives way, and Muley landed on his neck in the dirt. He got to his feet, walked dazedly around in a circle, and then pointed straight for the bunk-house. A section of the porch is around one of his feet, and he drags it along like a toggled bear. He stopped in front of Chuck and Hen, and smiled absently.

"How did the old man like her, Muley?" inquired Chuck.

Muley rubbed a swelling on the back of his head and shrugged his shoulders.

"Take a look and answer it your own self," he wailed. "I knowed she wasn't no Lillian Russell for looks, but I didn't think she'd drive him to murder."

"What did you say to him?" asked Chuck sympathetically.

"Say? I said: 'I'm the *hombre* what delivers the goods. She can cook——' "

"What did he say?" grinned Hen.

"He didn't say," wailed Muley. "He hit me with a chair and pitched me off the porch. He can keep his old thousand dollars—ornery old son-of-a-gun!"

CAME the rattle of a buggy, and they turned to see Telescope Tolliver and a lady. The lady was a stranger to the trio, and was resplendent in gorgeous colors, both as to complexion and clothes, and Telescope smiled triumphantly, as he pointed at the porch with his whip.

"What's going on up there?" he asked.

"Reception," grunted Chuck, wiggling his ears at the lady. "Muley spread the word, Telescope, and it's a bridal reception waiting for you."

"Gracious!" exclaimed the lady, and Hen nodded. "Yes'm—I hope so."

"Where's the old man?" asked Telescope.

"In the house," replied Chuck. "Bashful old pelican."

Telescope swung the team around and drove to the house. Muley grinned sadly and walked unsteadily into the bunk-house, while Chuck and Hen followed the rig up to the house.

Telescope stopped with a flourish, and a smile at the reception committee, but there were no answering smiles. Telescope glanced inquiringly at Chuck, but the latter's immobile, trusting eyes gave him no clue.

"Hold the team, will you, Chuck?" asked Telescope. "I want to go in and see the old man."

"You don't need to get down," stated the old man's voice from the door, and he stumbled out with his hat in his hand and cold anger in his eyes.

"Mister Whittaker, this is Miss Van Dyke," announced Telsecope. "She can cook a little, and ——"

The old man kicked loose a remnant of the broken porch, which hit one of the high-strung horses in the ribs, and then he hopped into the air and cracked his heels together.

"Yeah-h-h-h-h-h!" he screeched and threw his hat at the head of the nearest horse, with the result the front wheel of the buggy removed the rest of the broken porch, left the wheel there as a token, and rattled and banged out of sight across the prairie.

When Telescope made the introduction he was standing up, and when the team whirled into the porch Telescope imitated a pin-wheel and lit in the dust on his back with Miss Van Dyke sitting on his chest.

She slid from there to the ground and tried to lift her big hat off the bridge of her nose. Telescope got to his feet, dug the dirt out of his eyes, and pointed at the lady. He couldn't talk.

The old man nodded understandingly and jerked his thumb over his shoulder toward the rest of the frightened women.

"Herd her with the rest, Telescope," he said. "Bunch 'em until I can build a corral." And then he limped slowly down toward the bunk-house.

Henry and Chuck turned slowly and followed the old man, who walked into the bunk-house door, and then came right out again, with the big water bucket hanging

around his neck. He wandered straight for the corral, talking to himself and slapping his hands on his hips.

Muley peered out as Chuck and Hen came up to the door.

"Old pelican thought he could slip down here and hand me another one, I reckon," grinned Muley. "Golly, he sure must of hated that lady on sight. I handed him the bucket full of water, believe me!"

Chuck gave Muley an idea of what happened to Telescope, and he shook his head, sadly.

"We sure must have guessed wrong—or Chuck lied about that thousand dollars."

"I didn't lie!" snapped Chuck. "He said it. You and that animated flagpole had to cut in and do a jobbing business, and ruin things. I told you to keep off, didn't I? He'd ought to kill you both, believe me!"

"Say, is Whittaker around here?" inquired a voice at the door.

"Howdy, Hank," greeted Hen. "How's things at the Seven A?"

"Mer-r-yah!" snarled Padden. "Where is he?"

"Down at the corral, I reckon," answered Chuck.

"Corral?"

"Yes," nodded Chuck. "Want me to give you a map? He don't know what the word means, boys, 'cause his animals are all raised pets."

Chuck and Hen, scenting trouble, followed Padden down to where the old man stood at the corral gate, gazing off into space. He whirled and glared at Padden.

"Why don't you get a nose-bag?" asked Padden sarcastically. "Look better than that bucket."

The old man stared down at the bucket, and then threw it over the fence.

"What do you want, Padden?" he demanded.

"Where's my Swede cook?" asked Padden. "You danged kidnaper! Make love to my cook will you?" and he made a rush at the old man.

The footing was none too secure, and Padden must have misjudged the distance, because, when the whirl of dust blew away, Padden's head was through a space between the poles of the fence, and the old man was on his hands and knees, administring chastisement to Padden with a piece of broken board. Padden managed to squirm loose and got out of range of that broken board.

"I ain't kidnaped—uh—no—uh—Swede!" panted the old man. "If she's up at the—uh—uh—house—go get her! Gol—uh—dang it!"

Padden looked himself over sadly and nodded, and then limped up toward the house.

"What seems to be the trouble around here?" inquired a voice, and they turned to see Johnny Myers, foreman of the Triangle, sitting there on his horse, staring at them.

"How—howdy, Johnny," panted the old man.

"How—howdy ——!" snorted Johnny. "I came for my cook, and I'm going right up and get her. *Sabe?*"

"He's a gentleman and I wish him luck," stated the old man hopefully, as Myers rode toward the house. "Reckon I better wash up a little before somebody else brings me a cook."

Hen and Chuck wandered back to the bunk-house, just as Padden and Myers rode down that way and stopped. The old man sat on the edge of the horse trough and slowly washed his hands, and paid no attention to them as they rode past.

"Chuck, I'd admire to have some kind of an explanation," begged Padden, glancing back at the house. "Hulda insists that she's hired out for seventy-five a month and won't come back to the Seven A."

"Annie puts up the same howl," nodded Myers. "Old J. B. ain't got no use for two cooks."

"Two?" yelped Chuck. "Two? Them are all cooks up there!"

"My ——!" exclaimed Hank piously. "I hit a crazy man!"

"Yes," agreed Hen, "and you'll be sorry every time you set down, Hank."

"Here comes the sheriff and the doctor," grinned Myers. "Between that combination we ought to do well."

"I've got a warrant for the arrest of J. B. Whittaker, charging attempt to murder upon the person of Doctor Milliken," announced the sheriff. "Where is Jay Bird, Chuck?"

"He tried to puncture my earthly envelope," apologized Doc. "He's cook crazy!"

Chuck wiggled his ears desperately for a moment, and then:

"You fellers all come in the bunk-house with me. I got something to tell you."

THEY filed into the bunk-house, and gathered around Chuck, while he unfolded the whole tale, as near as he could.

"We was getting rotten cooking," concluded Chuck lamely, "and—everybody seemed to think he wanted to get married."

"He really said he'd give a thousand dollars if he was married," stated Hen. "He sure did."

"That warrant is null and void, Bill," laughed Doc. "I don't blame the old man a bit, but how in thunder is he ever going to explain things to all them women?"

"My cook is a darn good pot-wrastler, but her head is six feet thick," wailed Padden. She can't see nothing but that seventy-five dollars."

"Mine, too," nodded Johnny Myers. "She's minus understanding."

"You do it, Doc," begged Chuck. "Can't you frame something?"

Doc Milliken scratched his head for a moment, and then:

"Hank, you hitch up a team to the old man's hay-rack, and the rest of you fellers stay right here. I got an idea."

They shut the door behind them, and in a few minutes the old man came in slowly and sat down on a bunk.

"I'm sick," he announced sadly. "I'm a sick man."

"Uh-huh," grunted Chuck. "You're sufferring from a complication of females, old-timer."

Bill McFee picked up a greasy deck of cards and began to build a solitaire layout, while the rest of the crowd watched him, abstractedly. Suddenly the door creaked and through the narrow opening came Telescope's voice:

"Hey, Muley! Pitch my war-sack outside, will you?"

"Ain't fired are you, Telescope?" asked Chuck.

"Not me—I'm quitting. I ain't going to get no smallpox."

"Smallpox?" grunted the old man. "Who's got smallpox?"

"You have!" yelped Telescope. "Leave my stuff there, Muley. I don't want it after he's contaminated it that way."

"Well, ——!" wailed the old man, as the door banged shut. "What will I have next? I ain't got no smallpox—gol dingle dang it! Where could I get smallpox?"

"From me," laughed Doc Milliken, sticking his head into the back window. "I gave you the first thing I thought of. That accounts for it all. You was delerious and didn't know what you was doing. Talk about fast colors! Whooe-e-e! Calico never faded so fast."

Came the rattle of a wagon, and they made a rush to the door, in time to see a wagon-load of women jolt past and roll out of sight up the road.

"Gone!" gasped the old man. "Gone! I'm too much relieved to be curious, but I'd sure like to have a little light on the subject. Am I or am I not crazy?"

"You are," declared Chuck. "But not too crazy."

"Chuck," the old man hitched his gun around to the front, and rubbed the palms of his hands on his hips. "Chuck, you're doing the talking."

"Well," said Chuck, "we thought—now, keep your hands off that gun! You want to hear this? Well, fold your arms. Seems like everybody wanted to get you married, and you said—remember the day I brought you that long letter? Remember I said that you ought to get married, and you said: 'I'd give a thousand dollars if I was.' Remember that? You said you'd give a thousand if you was, and ——"

"Yeah!" howled the old man. "Yeah, I said that! Go ahead!"

"Didn't you mean it?" asked Chuck.

"Gol dingle dang it! Course I meant it."

"Well," wearily, "what you kicking about? We done the best we could to earn that money and make you happy."

"Best?" yelped the old man. "You done your ——"

"Necktie party?" inquired a voice, and they turned to see Ricky Henderson sitting there on a pinto horse, grinning at them. He looped one long leg around the horn of his saddle and calmly rolled a cigaret.

"Well, let's get to the bottom of this here thing," grunted Whittaker. "Go ahead, Chuck."

"Well," continued Chuck, glaring at Ricky, "you said you'd give a thousand dollars if you was married, and ——"

"Yah!" spat the old man. "I said it—dang you! I said I'd give a thousand dollars if I was married. Can't you understand United States language? Listen: I don't like to tell this in public, but there comes a time in the life of every darn man

when he gets so mad or crazy that he has to bare his soul. *Sabe?* I'm both, I reckon. When I was down at Great Falls, a month ago, I met a female of the species who seems to be a gold-digger, and she—she sued me for breach of promise and ten thousand dollars. That long letter was from a lawyer—dang you, Chuck."

"You said you'd give a thousand dollars if you was—" began Chuck weakly.

"Was—you imbecile!" howled the old man. "Was—not to get! Now, who is to blame for——"

"Wait," begged Chuck. "Wait a minute."

Chuck whirled and trotted to the door of the bunk-house, and came back in a moment, with a bunch of envelopes in his hands. He sorted them over and glared at Ricky, who looked supremely innocent of wrong-doing.

"Ricky," Chuck placed both hands on his hips and wiggled his ears at Ricky. "Ricky, did you ever find out who sent you that picture of a barber shaving a pig?"

"Nope," replied Ricky, shaking his head. "Wish I knew. I sure bought a lot of them things, and I handed somebody a bunch, but nobody peeped."

"Nobody peeped, eh?" snapped Chuck. "You sure handed somebody a bunch, Mister Henderson. The wrong folks got it handed to them."

Chuck tore open an envelope, looked at the contents, and then handed the whole bunch to Ricky.

"Take your darn funny pictures and get off the ranch before I——"

"My ——!" gasped Ricky, staring at the envelopes. "I—I sent the wrong bunch of letters!"

"You most absolutely did!" yelled Chuck.

"I—I wish I knew who sent that one to me?" mumbled Ricky foolishly. "I—I'd like to get even. I'd send this whole works to that one person. I'd sure like to get even with that person."

"Yah?" yelped the old man. "Would, eh? Say you would? Well, gol darn your hide, Ricky, you are! According to my judgment you're even. *Sabe?* I—I sent it to you."

EXAMPLES OF CHINESE RESPONSIBILITY

BY HUGH THOMASON

CASE was mentioned a few years ago, where a Chinese soldier on guard had stolen some thirty boxes of bullets placed in his care, and sold them to a tinner, who supposed them to be condemned and surplus stores. The soldier was beaten one hundred blows, and banished to the frontiers of the country in penal servitude. A sergeant whose duty it was to inspect the stores was condemned to eighty blows and dismissed from the service, though allowed to commute his punishment for a money payment. The purchasers of the material were considered innocent of any blame, but on general principles were given forty blows of the light bamboo.

The lieutenant in charge was cashiered in order to be put upon trial for his "connivance" in the theft, but he judiciously disappeared. The board to which the memorial was addressed was requested to determine the penalty to be inflicted upon the general in command, for his share in the matter. Thus each individual is a link in the chain which is followed up to the very end, and no link can escape by pleading ignorance or inability to prevent the crime.

In the case of a flood in the Yung-ting River in the province of Chihli during one Summer, the waters came down from the mountains with the velocity of a mill-race. The officials seem to have been promptly on hand, and to have risked their lives in struggling to do what was utterly beyond the powers of man. They were as helpless as ants under a rain-spout during a Summer torrent. But this did not prevent Li Hung Chang from requesting that they should be immediately stripped of their buttons, or deprived of their rank without being removed from their posts, and the governor-general consistently concludes his memorial with the usual request that his own name should be sent to the Board of Punishments for the determination of a penalty to be inflicted upon him for his complicity in the affair.

Similar floods have occurred since, and upon each occasion a similar memorial has been presented.

BALTIMORE BILL

by Hapsburg Liebe

Author of "That Woman," "Alias John Doe," etc.

ALLISON McLAURIN was a big-boned and gaunt young man, and a clerk in one of Knoxville's department stores, and he was too sick to work and yet not sick enough to be abed. The ribbon-counter girl sympathetically declared that it was an aggravated case of Spring fever; the shoes man suggested a better boarding-house; and the head clerk—who disliked McLaurin, and without any reason whatever—seemed to think that a vacation would be just the thing.

The upshot of the matter was that the half-sick man wrung a month off without pay from his employers, after which he went directly to a doctor's office.

Now this doctor was a wise one, and he had known McLaurin for years. Said he to the half-sick man:

"As a clerk, Al, you're a collossal misfit. You're too big to be a clerk! With twenty-five pounds more of flesh on you, you'd be a whopper. You belong to the out-of-doors, Al. Your grandparents on both sides were mountainfolk, as you know. None of your people ever did anything much at a shut-up occupation. If I were you, I'd change jobs; and for the present, I'd go for a month of plain hiking in the hills. You don't need medicine, Al. You've no dependent relatives, and there's nothing to keep you from going. Get snakebit, fall over cliffs and break your limbs—do anything, so long as you spend a month in the mountains! There's no charge, Al. Good-by, and good luck!"

All of which is to explain why three days later Allison McLaurin, in blue serge and a soft hat and a soft shirt, with a small pack on his back and with a blanket-roll swung soldier fashion over one shoulder, toiled along a narrow and winding trail that led into the heart of that wilderness that is called the Blackfern Mountain country.

His interest was centered wholly on the rugged and beautiful scenery that flanked the road on every side—tall deep-green hemlocks, jagged and dizzy cliffs and precipices, boulders as big as houses, tumbling streams, and seas upon seas of waxen-white laurel bloom. Each bend in the trail showed him something new, and always he was tensely eager to see what lay around the curves. It was a little like life, that trail; there was always something new beyond the bend.

As he approached a sharp turn in a sandy stretch of road, he heard sounds that stopped him short. It was a very youthful

voice that came from a point only a little distance ahead:

"*Chucka-lucka, chucka-lucka, chucka-lucka*—" very much like that, in imitation of the laboring exhaust of a locomotive.

Then came a series of shrill toots, as of a locomotive whistling for a road-crossing, two longs and two shorts—and Al McLaurin suddenly found himself facing a sunburned and freckled, hatless boy of some twelve years, who wore a fine-striped hickory shirt, and jeans trousers supported by a single home-made suspender.

The lad drew up a yard in front of McLaurin. In one hand he held the end of a dirty string; at the other end of that string there was a tomato-can that had been nailed horizontally to a short piece of board about three inches in width; strung out behind this tomato-can locomotive, and coupled one to another by bits of wire, were half a dozen sardine-cans for cars.

"Hello!" smiled McLaurin. "What's that?"

The boy had flushed awkardly at the first. Now he assumed a rather defiant manner and a rather stiff attitude.

"Git offen the track!" he ordered. "'What's that,' ye say? Ain't ye got no eyes? It's a railroad train. It's the Tennessee and Nawth Ca'liner train. What's ye name? Whar'd ye come from, and whar ye a-goin'?"

The city man laughed.

"Al McLaurin," he answered. "Knoxville. Following my toes. May I ask you the very same questions?"

The bright brown eyes of the owner and operator of the Tennessee & North Carolina glistened with sudden humor.

"Shore," he said. "My name's 'Baltimore Bill'. I'm jest from home, and I'm a goin' to —— ef I don't pray—pap allus said."

"Bully for your 'pap,'" McLaurin laughed insanely. Somehow, this boy had roped and hog-tied his goat, as the saying is. "Baltimore Bill," he muttered; "where did you get any such a name as that, son?"

"My daddy, he labeled it on me," readily. "Y'see, the' used to be a pow'ful timberjack fighter over at the Lonesome Creek loggin'-camp, and his name was 'Baltimore Bill' Malone. He was my daddy's sidekick, and when I was borned my daddy he named me after his pardner. My pap's name is 'Bad Jim' Henry, and he shore is a bad aig. I don't like him much—leastwise, not very much. You've heerd tell o' my pap, o' course? Everybody has."

McLaurin shook his head.

"You never!" exploded Baltimore Bill. He went on scathingly: "W'y, I bet you don't know who's the gov'nor o' Cyarter County! Got any strings in ye pockets, 'at'd do to pull this here ingine with?"

Again the half-sick man shook his head. The freckled lad looked upon him in contempt for his poverty so far as worthwhile worldly possessions were concerned. But Baltimore Bill soon forgot that.

"Are ye a-lookin' for a place to stay all night?"

McLaurin glanced toward the lowering sun and nodded, and the boy continued:

"Unk Joe'll keep ye, but you better not offer to pay him. Unk Joe Devine. I'll show ye the way. I'd take ye home with me, but we ain't got nothin' much to eat, and no beds much. I ain't got no mammy, and pap he's gone most o' the time. Y'see, ef pap was to stay around home a good deal, the law'd git him; and ef the law didn't, Brock Nagle would. He could ha' shot Brock a heap o' times, ef he'd ha' wanted to. Ever hear tell o' Brock Nagle?"

"Don't believe I have, son," McLaurin answered.

"You never! W'y, you don't know nobody, do ye? I bet ye don't even know Bess Devine!"

"Don't believe I do."

Baltimore Bill looked the city man over as though he considered him hopeless. Then he began to turn the Tennessee & North Carolina around.

"Come on," he said. "Ef ye die afore ye eat at Unk Joe's table—he ain't my uncle, mister; he ain't nobody's uncle, but everybody calls him that jest the same—ef ye die afore ye eat at Unk Joe's table and see his Bess, ye ain't had no chanst in the world. Come on, mister."

McLaurin walked on beside Bad Jim Henry's boy, and the tin-cans clinked along behind them. The next turn in the trail was also a turn in the pathway of McLaurin's life. He had reached the crest of a ridge.

LYING down there before him, he saw the broad valley that separated Ironhead Mountain from the Blackfern, and through the center of it flowed a crystal stream that seemed to McLaurin

like a giant's rope of silver. Some two hundred acres of the land had been cleared, and that which was not under cultivation was in grass; and the green fields were dotted with many white and brown specks.

Near the center of the improved acres stood a big white frame house, and behind it a great log barn; and back of the barn there was a great orchard of apple-trees. McLaurin's breath was fairly taken by the panorama that lay spread out before him like some gigantic landscape painting.

Baltimore Bill Henry too had stopped. One of his dirty forefingers suddenly pointed downward and toward the white and brown specs.

"Them's Unk Joe's sheeps and cattles," he said. "Unk Joe Devine's. He's rich. They have everything they wants. Unk Joe and Aunt Patience is fools about Bess. She can read and write same as a preacher; she went to school over at Rocky Fork. She——"

There came a voice, a drawling but steely voice, that interrupted; it came from somewhere in the thickly-standing laurels that flanked the road to the right.

"Go home, Balt!"

McLaurin and the boy wheeled and looked, and McLaurin saw nothing.

"It's pap," Baltimore Bill muttered disappointedly to himself, but loud enough for McLaurin to hear; and with that he painstakingly turned the T. & N. C. and went off down the road as unconcernedly as though nothing whatever had happened.

With his rifle covering the city man, Bad Jim Henry strode out of the laurels. Bad Jim was tall and lank, with long brown mustaches and rather long brown hair. His lips were set together tightly, and his eyes were keen and bright; there was a certain underlying light of sadness in his eyes too, and McLaurin took note of it.

"How much money have ye got, mister?" asked Bad Jim.

McLaurin had not realized that anything in the nature of a hold-up was on foot until now. He turned his front trousers-pockets wrong side out, and found a little more than a dollar in small silver pieces. In an inside pocket, he had twenty dollars in bank-notes, but he said nothing of this to the hold-up man. He held the silver out to Henry.

But Bad Jim didn't take it. He barely glanced at it. His eyes were now roaming searchingly over McLaurin's raw-boned face.

"You ain't well, are ye, mister?" suddenly asked Bad Jim.

"I'm up here for my health," McLaurin said.

"And that's all the money ye've got!" exclaimed Baltimore Bill's sire. "Ye won't need much up here, but ye'll need more'n that. I ain't no millionaire, but I've got more'n you've got, and I'll divide with ye. Here——"

And with that, he slapped a dollar in paper money into McLaurin's hand!

McLaurin stared hard at the robber. Bad Jim had a conscience, indeed. Though he had done no wrong in preserving his property, McLaurin felt a little ashamed of himself.

"I've got twenty dollars more in another pocket," he confessed, "and I want you to take at least half of it."

Bad Jim calmly took back the paper dollar. He smiled a slow, whimsical smile.

"Mister," he said, "it's awful hard to be bad, sometimes. I ain't never been bad for what the' was in it; I've just been bad for the fun of it and to keep from thinkin' too much—about other things. I won't take nothin' offen you because you're square. Ef ever ye need a friend whilst ye're up here, holler for Jim Henry; I'm purty apt to hear ye. So long, mister, and good luck; and I'm plum' glad I met ye!"

He turned, took a few steps, and was gone, and scarcely a laurel leaf shook behind him. McLaurin stood thoughtful and very still for a moment; then he put the small silver pieces back into his pocket, and went on toward old Joe Devine's wilderness paradise.

The sun was going down when he reached the front gate and turned in. The walk that led to the long, vine-hung veranda was of beaten slate, and as smooth as the palm of your hand. The yard was a sweet-scented maze of old-fashioned flowering shrubs, roses and honeysuckles—a wilderness paradise, truly. A dog ran out and growled at him in a half-friendly fashion, and the booming voice of Joe Devine promptly scolded it away.

Within the next three minutes, Al McLaurin had shaken hands with Devine, a tall and white-haired, white-bearded mountaineer patriarch whose long suit was hospitality; with his wife, a straight little old woman whose smile seemed to be perpetual, with Bess, only child of this house of Devine;

a handsome fair girl with remarkable poise and remarkably gentle manners for one who had been bred so far back; and—with Brockwell Nagle, a big and middle-aged, smooth-faced dark man who wore a broad-brimmed hat, clay-colored corduroys, laced boots and a scowl.

McLaurin was asked to have off his luggage. He did so gratefully, and all of them save Nagle then had easy chairs there on the shaded veranda. Nagle showed his ill-breeding and his devilish nature by glancing as though knowingly first toward the stranger and then toward Bess in an accusing manner; this he did several times, after which he took up his frayed raw hide riding-whip and strode off like the boor he was.

McLaurin had not been blind to those shifting, accusing glances. He believed that Nagle had taken him for some very particular friend of the girl's, and Nagle really had; to Nagle, the coming of McLaurin explained exactly the reason why Bess wouldn't listen to his insistent proposals of marriage. The big hillman was narrow of vision, and now he was desperate, and it had been very easy for him to reach such a senseless, far-fetched conclusion.

After an altogether bountiful supper, old Joe Devine led the visitor into the best room, in the wide stone fireplace of which a fire had been kindled to break the chill that had come with nightfall; mountain evenings in June, are not like low-land evenings in June. The two men sat down in cozy sheepskin-lined rockers, and McLaurin at once brought up the name of Bad Jim Henry. Devine's countenance became a little grave.

"I was allus sorry for Jim," he drawled in his hill dialect. "Jim's wife—man, she was a love of a woman—she died when the boy was borned, and Jim ain't never been the same man sence. He's restless, and never satisfied. It's because o' that, I know, that he's a bad man; it keeps his mind offen pore Sallie. I don't think he likes that boy, which must be because he considers that the boy took his mother's life. Pore little devil! The lord knows he cain't he'p it.

"The name Jim put on him was mighty near a joke, though Balt does seem to be proud enough of it. I reckon it is hard for Jim, the boy a-lookin' like his mother like he does; he's the livin' image o' Sallie. Between me and you, Mr. McLaurin, that's the reason why Jim don't stay at home no more 'an he does; he cain't bear to look at that boy!"

Here McLaurin remembered the lad's saying of his father: "I don't like him much—leastwise, not very much." He knew why, now. Devine, his gaze turned sadly into the dancing flames in the fireplace, went on:

"The's allus been pow'ful bad blood betwixt Jim and Brock Nagle. Brock was wo'th a heap more in this world's goods 'an Jim was, but Sallie she took Jim because she loved him the best, and that's what made the bad blood so pow'ful bad. Them two takes reg'lar spells o' gunnin' for each other, and sometime the's shore a-goin' to be a killin' betwixt 'em. And ef I was a bettin' man, I'd bet ten good hosses ag'in a spotted dawg it's Brock who cashes in. Brock can shoot, but he cain't shoot nothin' like Jim."

McLaurin hadn't forgotten that which the boy had said concerning his father and Nagle. He understood now.

THE man from Knoxville accepted good-hearted old Joe Devine's pressing invitation to spend his vacation month there, and he did it chiefly because he had fallen in love with Bess almost at sight of her. Came a week that was a week of unbroken delight, in which McLaurin put on a pound of good hard flesh each day; he spent about half of those enchanted hours in fishing in Uncle Joe's Creek—that was its real name, by the way—with Bess, and the rest of them in roaming the meadows and flower-filled woods with Bess, and you can guess just what that meant for both of them.

During the next two weeks, several noteworthy things came to pass. Al McLaurin had continued to gain his pound each day, and he was now in splendid physical condition. As for his attitude toward Bess now—he had begun to wish that he might spend the rest of his life in the hills with her! Perhaps the fact that his grandparents on both sides had been hillfolk had helped him on to this; perhaps it was the call of his blood. Perhaps, too, it had been the call of his blood that had made him lose his heart to Joe Devine's daughter so soon after he had met her.

He had saved Baltimore Bill from drowning in a deep pool of the creek, tied up a toe

the boy had stubbed badly in falling, and carried him and his tin-can "train" to Bad Jim's little old cabin. Bad Jim, strange to relate, had been at home to receive them; he had thanked McLaurin very earnestly, after which he had told him once more:

"Ef ever ye need a friend whilst ye're up here, jest holler for Jim Henry; I'll be purty apt to hear ye." And he had added, "Ye're a-goin' to need a good friend shortly, I'm a-thinkin'."

Which had hardly puzzled McLaurin, for Brock Nagle had warned him half a dozen times that he had but three days in which to leave the Blackfern country.

"Why?" McLaurin had asked on the last of these occasions.

He had met Nagle in the road, not far from the house of the Devines.

"Because I said so," wickedly; and with that Nagle had slashed at McLaurin's face with his squirt, missed—purposely, Joe Devine said afterward—and ridden away in a gallop.

Came a sunny Thursday, and McLaurin's vacation was over all but one day. He had spent half of the night before in lying awake in his bed and calling himself a hundred kinds of a fool. There he was heels over head and hopelessly in love with Bess Devine—he thought of it as Divine, not Devine—a girl who was worth all that her heart could desire, while he. . . .

He, himself, he was a clerk in Huggins & Armbrust's Department Store. A —— notions clerk. Allison McLaurin was a very miserable young man. The awakening of the night before had been a very, very bitter awakening.

He went to the veranda steps and rather crumpled on the second one. Soft footfalls sounded behind him, and he turned his head to see Bess coming, smiling down at him; and she was in pale blue. She sat down beside him.

"So you're going away tomorrow," somehow regretfully, he thought. "I wonder whether we'll ever see you any more."

It was a torment. It was more than a man could bear. He turned his face toward her, and his face was a little white and desperate. Never before had she seemed so comely, and that too was to him a torment.

For the first time in his life he floundered badly when he tried to speak, and he hated himself for it.

"If you—if your father—if you——"

At that instant there came either a merciful—or a merciless—interruption.

Toot! Toot! Toot-toot!" in a shrill, youthful voice, from a point not far from the gate.

There was the jangling of tin cans as they were being dragged over the slate walk that led to the veranda. Baltimore Bill Henry, limping slightly, was coming in advance of his T. & N. C. train. The two on the steps eyed him soberly as he came. Soon they saw that he carried around one shoulder, as a soldeir carries his blanket-roll, a full cartridge-belt with a walnut-handled revolver in its holster.

When he had reached the lower step, the Henry boy halted. He took off the belt and revolver and placed them in McLaurin's lap.

"Pap said," he began, "for you to tote this. He said to tell ye, Al, ye're might' nigh shore to need it. Got any strings in ye pockets, Al? This here ingine does wear out a heap o' strings. Railroadin's some job, I'm a-tellin' ye!"

McLaurin' forced himself to smile.

"Much obliged, son. No, I haven't any strings in my pockets. But maybe I can send you some——"

Bess cut in easily:

"Mother will give you some twine, Baltimore. She's back of the house somewhere. Ask her."

The boy had barely disappeared around a corner of the house when an evil-visaged man entered the yard by the front gateway. He wore old and run-over cowhide boots, and his slouch hat was pinned up,desperado fashion, in front; under one arm he carried a Winchester rifle.

"Be careful, Mr. McLaurin," whispered Bess. "That's a Nagle. There's a lot of them, and they do whatever Brock says for them to do."

McLaurin had buckled Bad Jim's revolver about his waist when the mountaineer halted squarely before him and spoke:

"Brock told me to tell you he's done quit a-foolin' with ye. He wants to know whuther ye're a goin', or not."

"Tell Brock," McLaurin replied a little hotly, "to come and see for himself. Your business here is over, I take it. Good-by!"

The Nagle gave the Knoxville man a hard look, turned on his heel and left. As

he passed out of the yard, McLaurin muttered to his companion:

"I beg pardon for talking like that before you. It might have brought on a fight."

"It's a bad gang," Bess said in a low, half-frightened voice. "I'm afraid they'll get you! There's not much law out here, you see. Oh, I hate to seem to be running you off—but don't you think you had better go?"

HE looked into her earnest blue eyes. That which he saw there encouraged him, and he came out with it as nearly like a man as he could:

"I wish I could stay here always, Bess, with you; for that privilege, I'd be willing to fight all the Nagles. I haven't asked you to marry me because I am worth nothing, nothing whatever. Tell me, would it be fair, my asking you—I'd work like a dog on this farm, Bess—would you and your father and mother think it fair?"

Before the girl could answer, Baltimore Bill came dashing around a corner of the house; he carried in one hand a whole ball of cotton twine, and he was so happy that he had forgotten his injured toe.

"Looky!" he jubilated, drawing up before the couple. "Looky here!"

There was not a word of comment. The silence was heavy, and Baltimore Bill proceeded to make conversation; quite naturally, he voiced the very first thing that happened into his mind.

"I meant to ax ye afore I went home, Al· are you and Bess a-thinkin' about gittin' married?"

Some little coloring of the grown-ups' faces, but no answer. Again the silence became thick, and again Baltimore Bill proceeded to break it with talk made of the next thing that entered his mind.

"Brock's mad at you 'cause he thinks you took Bess away from him, Al. Ain't I right, Bess?"

Bess colored even more.

"I—I never was his, I never was Brock's," she faltered. "I—I never even half-way p-p-promised I'd be. I never liked him enough for that."

"Are you and Bess a-goin' to marry, Al?" the boy pursued—wickedly, McLaurin thought.

"Tell your father, son," McLaurin said evenly, "that I'm very much obliged to him. And tell him that if it becomes necessary to use this gun, I'll use it."

Baltimore Bill nodded, gave a few preliminary toots, turned the T. & N. C. with some remark to himself about running empty, and soon disappeared. He had hardly done so, when Brockwell Nagle rode up to the gate.

"Le' me see ye, McLaurin," he called gruffly.

McLaurin rose on the steps. If he didn't go to the gate, Nagle would come in, and that might mean quarreling, or even blows, in the presence of the girl. McLaurin walked down to the gate.

"What sort o' word was that you sent to me?" clipped Nagle.

"I told your man to tell you that if you wanted to know whether I was running, you might come and see for yourself. You're here; do you see?" McLaurin said bitingly.

His hill blood was up now.

"I ain't blind. I see also ye've took to totin' a gun."

"Unlawful, I know," coldly shot back McLaurin. "But you're carrying one under your coat, therefore I fail to find wherein I'm breaking any more law than you are. So far as guns are concerned——"

He unfastened Bad Jim's cartridge-belt and threw it and its burden of holster and revolver to the grass at his feet; he did it because he saw that gun-play was imminent, and because he wished neither to kill a man nor to be killed himself. There was one decent alternative.

"If you whip me in a hand-to-hand fight, Nagle," he continued, "I'll leave here for good; and if I whip you in a hand-to-hand fight, you're to leave here for good—are you game for a proposition like that?"

"Nothin' but hands, on honor?" asked Nagle, craftily.

He was a trifle heavier than McLaurin, and he had great confidence in his own strength. Moreover, he had a big black card up his sleeve.

"Nothing but our hands, on honor," said McLaurin.

Brock Nagle unbuckled his cartridge-belt, and dropped it and his revolver to the grass beside those of Bad Jim Henry. Then he dismounted and fastened his horse's rein to a gatepost.

"It might not be right to fight afore Bess," he half-whispered foxily. "Yonder she stands on the po'ch, a-lookin' this away. Down acrost the meadow is a grassy place

with trees around it; le's go to it. I'm shore a'goin' to maul yer head off, McLaurin."

In the grassy place with trees around it, a dozen of his kinsmen were waiting for him. This was the big black card he had up his sleeve.

Looking backward, Baltimore Bill Henry saw and recognized the two men, who were walking rapidly toward the tree-lined dell. Boy that he was, he knew it meant something entirely out of the ordinary; so he immediately severed connection with the T. & N. C., and ran back to the Devines' front gate, meaning to call Bess out.

But Bess was standing by the gate when he reached it, and she was pale.

"They're going over there to fight," the girl breathed tremulously, and more to herself than to the Henry boy, "and some other Nagles may be there waiting for Brock!"

"Right!" cried Baltimore Bill.

Then he proved that he was his father's son, and you will soon learn just what that meant for McLaurin. He snatched up his father's revolver and belt, and fairly threw the latter-named over one shoulder; the bigger revolver and belt of Brock Nagle, he fairly threw into the hands of Bess. She caught them grudgingly in spite of herself; though she knew how to use firearms, to her they were still a little wicked and strange.

"We'll see 'at he gits a square deal," declared the boy, his voice vibrant with determination. "He saved me outen the creek, and I like him. You like him too, don't ye, Bess?"

"I do, I do!" seeming glad to own it. She slipped the heavy belt over her head and hung it from one shoulder. "Yes, we'll see that he isn't mistreated——"

Old Joe Devine called from the veranda—

"What's wrong, Bess?"

"Get your rifle and hurry down to the ash trees!" Bess called back.

She ran on a yard ahead of the running boy, and in her right hand was Brock Nagle's revolver. Fighting was unwomanly, beyond doubt; but she loved Allison McLaurin, who loved her, and for him she would fight. Such was the spirit that lived and had its being in Bess Devine.

McLaurin saw the trap the moment he had set foot in the lush grass of the dell. He saw that he would not be permitted to go back without a battle, even if he wished to do so. The proposition he had made and Nagle had accepted had been a flat one; he had been foolish not to specify certain conditions, and now he was willing to pay for his mistake. While the two belligerents threw off their coats and squared up to each other, the other Nagles gathered in a ring around them, and fingered weapons longingly. Bess had said it was a bad gang. It was!

Yes, though he knew he would not be permitted to whip his antagonist, knew that Brock Nagle had everything to win while he had nothing according to the light in which the Nagle chief would choose to see the thing, McLaurin entered the battle spiritedly. It was a matter of principle. He was now as strong as hickory, and he had always been as quick as a panther; he knew the game of boxing as few ever know it without being actually engaged in it. The first three minutes of the fight saw Brock Nagle's evil face battered and streaked with blood, while the other Nagles watched it as though thunderstruck.

Then McLaurin sent out a terrific left and knocked his adversary down clean, and the kinsmen of the fallen man came to themselves; weapons flashed, but they were afraid to fire because of the danger of hitting each other. The dozen hurled themselves toward McLaurin, who drove to the ground the first two that reached him. Then a Nagle caught him on the back of the head from behind with the butt of a rifle; he staggered through one side of the cursing human tangle, and fell on his face.

As he tried weakly and dazedly to rise, Brock Nagle climbed to his feet. Gurgling oaths, Brock Nagle took a revolver from the hand of one of his kinsmen, and began to take a slow, dead aim at McLaurin. It was over for him, McLaurin thought; the last bend in the trail of his life had come. Then he thought of Bad Jim Henry. It came, all of it, in a flash.

"Ef ever ye need a friend—" Bad Jim had said.

But he couldn't call to his friend now. All was growing so dark now. . . .

Dimly he heard the thunder of a rifle. Another rifle cracked, and another, and another. There was the popping of revolvers, and more rifle-shots. . . .

Came a little period in which Allison McLaurin knew little or nothing. Cold

water had its usual almost marvelous effect in such cases. He opened his eyes and saw the solemn, rugged face of Jim Henry; Henry was bending over him with a soaking-wet badanna in his hand, and Henry had a wounded forearm. On the other side of him stood Baltimore Bill, with his father's revolver lying in the crook of his arm, and old Joe Devine, who leaned upon the muzzle of a long rifle.

There was yet another face over him; he had to bend his aching head backward in order to see it. It was then that he knew that he lay with his head in the lap of Bess, who had fought for him.

"What—what became of the Nagles?" he muttered.

Bad Jim told him:

"Brock has gone to answer to the Big Master; I shot him to keep him from a-shootin' you, and I got here jest in time to do it. The others got here jest in time, too—Unk Joe and Bess and Balt. All of us shot about three times apiece, and 'en the varmints drapped to their knees; they ain't got no narve, without Brock. Unk Joe told 'em ef they ever raised rough-house ag'in, he'd have State sojers in here, and they're all skeered might' nigh to death. Brock was the only one killed, but a lot o' the rest of 'em was hurt. Do ye feel like walkin'——"

Bad Jim's voice trailed off into silence. His gaze was now on the face of his little son, which was the face of his Sallie; the boy stared at him solemnly out of the sweet brown eyes of his Sallie, and he couldn't bear it. The old, old heart-break was upon him.

"Balt," he ordered almost piteously, "you go over to Unk Joe's house, and stay the night with 'em ef they'll let ye."

"No efs about it," said Devine. "Balt can stay as long as he wants to."

Silently, regretfully, the boy turned away. He didn't understand. His sire finished his speech to McLaurin—

"Do you feel like walkin' now?"

The wounded man nodded.

THE middle of the afternoon found McLaurin in fresh clean clothing, and fast recuperating from the shock of the blow the back of his head had received. He sat alone on the veranda now, and wondered whether it would be right for him to ask Bess again if it would be fair for him to propose marriage to her. Soon he saw Devine approaching him. That tall and white-bearded patriarch took a chair beside McLaurin's, leaned over and put a hand gently on McLaurin's shoulder.

"Son," came the kindly old voice, addressing him as though he were but a lad, "son, Bess told me and her mother what you said. And it's fair for ye to ax her. You said ye didn't have nothin'; w'y, son, what you've got is wo'th more'n a million dollars!"

"What—what have I got?" McLaurin faltered.

"Big heart and manhood, son." And with that, Joe Devine rose and walked away.

Shortly afterward, Bess came to the veranda. Late twilight found them still sitting there, and Bess now held Baltimore Bill asleep in her arms; she was so sorry for him that it almost—almost, but not quite—marred her happiness. A tall, lank figure came up the slate walk with the step of a wild thing; it was Bad Jim Henry, and in another moment he had halted close before the trio on the veranda. He pointed to his son.

"Asleep?"

Bess nodded.

"Give him to us, Jim," she murmured, her voice full of tears. "Give him to Al and me. We'll make a good man of him, Jim."

Henry stood as motionless and as silent as a tree for a long minute. Then he put a brown hand out toward McLaurin, and McLaurin gripped it hard.

"You'll be good to him, Al, I know," said Bad Jim. "I never could. Every time I'd see him, it'd might' nigh drive me crazy. But one reason I never treated him better was because I knowed I'd haf to leave him sometime, and I didn't want it to hurt him—I didn't want him to like me too much, and he don't. May the Big Master bless you two and him, Al, and may ye never lose her. I hope ye can understand, and I hope ye won't blame me too much. My heart's all broke to——."

Bad Jim Henry knelt and took up the hands of his son and his son's very devoted mother of the future, kissed them both, rose and turned away; and not one of them ever saw him again.

And as he went he stumbled over a string of tin-cans that lay on the slate walk.

EVIDENCE

by Gordon Young

Author of "Law and Order," "Chivalry," etc.

IT TOOK but little evidence to hang a man in the early Californian days; and when that evidence came from a woman—it was fatal.

Castle Rock was a typical mining-town as mining-towns went in the fifties: a bunch of shacks in a remote gulch, and a saloon for every hundred inhabitants, and Greg Sanderson drinking more than his share.

Jack Stevens was not a typical miner. He was a young fellow drawn Westward by the rush; a quiet and gentle young man, and his partner accused him of being "educated." Chris Barlow was a rugged old miner and loved Jack as a son.

Nor was Frankie Alden a typical woman of the camps. Her father called her "strange," and much of the time she did seem preoccupied, as though listening to soundless voices, as though gazing at invisible shapes. Often, very often, she wandered alone to some shaded, rocky place and sat the afternoon and evening out.

No one knew that she was trying to avoid Greg Sanderson; nor did she ever tell Jack Stevens when first he chanced upon her, or when he met her again and again. Secretive and strange, she was. Scarcely less so was he. He never mentioned her to any one, not even to his partner. Theirs was a secret, an idyll in the midst of rough-handed, rough-tongued, gold-gouging miners. He loved her. He understood her. And she—she loved him as a woman does only when she has reached the top years of maidenhood without suspecting that there is in the world such a thing as love. All the vague dreams of her life took shape and came to reality in his arms.

Then Greg Sanderson, suspicious, jealous, partly drunk, waited and shot Jack Stevens as he was walking in the twilight after an afternoon with her; and she, poised upon a rock to follow his form with her eyes, saw. She did not know who the murderer was. That is, she did not actually know. She screamed. Sanderson ran.

Jack Stevens was dead. She crouched in tears over his body and took no count of time. No thought of rousing the camp came to her. He whom she loved was dead: the bullet that entered his heart had, though it touched no blood of hers, given her a wound that left her stunned, a wound that would never heal into so much as a scar.

Sanderson thought he had been recognized. He was a deadly gunman and not without nerve. He mounted and rode from the camp; and behind him he left the warning that if pursuers came after him his trail would be made plain by the dead men he left in it. He rode unmolested from sight. Later Barlow took the trail, Barlow and another man. In the morning others followed. They found the body of Barlow and the friend; and no other sign of Sanderson. He rode away and Castle Rock heard of him no more.

The day after the funerals—all were buried together—Frankie Alden disappeared. She was not heard from again in

Castle Rock; but then, Castle Rock did not long remain a camp. Three months later men had begun to say it was worked out. Besides, just over the range another strike had been made where, so it was said, nuggets large as men's heads were easily found. Almost overnight what had been a thriving and populous camp at Castle Rock vanished. A few shreds of muslin and canvas, the dusty trails that had been streets and roads, and heaps of tin cans, were all that remained to mark the place.

Greg Sanderson rode north, lingered in one camp and another for some months, tried his pick in various diggings, struck a seam of pure gold in a river-bed and washed out twenty thousand dollars in a fortnight. He turned southward and took the steamer from Sacramento for San Francisco. He had made his pile. He was Eastward-bound.

San Francisco was—and still is—the siren of the West. Eventually every man that came into California came there. Those bound East with fortunes in their pouches often had to wait for sailing dates. Too, there was drinking and dancing and gambling: a dithyramb of robust vice whirled through a hundred doors and lured the wayfarers as the fatal singers of the ocean rocks lured sailormen in the Homeric days.

Few, incalculably few, were they who did not idle an hour at the monte table and soon find themselves plunging crazily with their fortunes tremulously balanced on the turn of a card. And who came to San Francisco at some hour of the night stopped in at the El Dorado, where a band played and women sang, and women dealt monte, and where for some months there had been a monte-dealer who wore a mask.

Greg Sanderson lonesomely drank at the bar. He might easily have made friends with fellows to the right and left; but he was not in a convivial mood. He knew his weakness was gambling and drink, and he carried a fortune on him. In two days he would sail for New York and he wanted to carry it with him. He drank alone—again—again. Midnight was far away. There was nothing to do but drink and gamble. After all he could pass a few hours cautiously playing.

SANDERSON made his way to a monte table. There was a crowd about it. There was always a crowd about that table, and the betting was unusualy heavy. The woman who dealt wore a mask. It was said that no man had seen her face, but that was not so. What is more, her name was well known to the management and employees of the El Dorado, but they pretended ignorance. The mystery made her table the more popular. Besides, enough of her face was visible for men to tell that she was beautiful.

Her fingers were slender, strong and white—beautiful fingers, nimble and accurate. Every night she soaked her hands in hot water. She had done so for months: it gave the fingers a suppleness and speed that could elude the keenest eyes, and she lived with 'Nita Joyce. 'Nita was the shrewdest monte-dealer on the coast, and what 'Nita knew she had taught this strange, beautiful girl who spent every possible minute in practising the handling of the cards. A Spanish deck—the monte deck—is easier to manipulate than the other. There are fewer cards in it.

The masked dealer caught sight of Sanderson when he reached past those nearest the table and placed his bet. She always scanned each newcomer's face. If she had been watched closely night after night it might have seemed that she waited, waited inexorably, for the one man whom she knew the god of vengeance would not let escape her. And for month on end she had practised with the cards to ruin him when he came.

After that—well, torture first, then somehow he must die. Away off in the mountains there was a grave: her heart was buried there. It would be of no use to accuse him to the San Francisco authorities of the murder in far-away Castle Rock. That mining-camp was no more. All witnesses were scattered to the four winds.

She dealt mechanically; and then when shuffling the deck for a new layout whispered to one of the house men. He went away and came back with a glass of water, but in the meantime he had found opportunity to carry her message to Billy Reed, one of the cappers. A capper is a fellow employed in gambling-houses to buck the house, to bet big money by way of example to get others to loosen up; and also to banter and encourage the players around him so that they will plunge recklessly. All that the capper wins is secretly refunded to the bank.

Billy was a dapper little man, really noth-

ing more than a tin-horn though he loved the pose of a plunger. People rather liked him. He was good-natured and harmless: wore flashy clothes and had a swagger; also a large brilliant on his left hand and another on his shirt bosom. That these were glass did not interfere with his satisfaction in them since the miners and familiars of the El Dorado could scarcely distinguish glass from diamonds. Billy also had what is now called a "line of bunk" that would either seduce or irritate the very cautious player into recklessness.

"I think I'll ride with you," said Billy when he had eased himself into a position by Sanderson's side. "You look lucky to me."

He had complimented Sanderson in the way that a gambler likes to be complimented, by placing heavy bets on the cards Sanderson, with small bets, picked to win.

And win they did. The first thing Sanderson realized was that this flat-nosed little gambler was getting rich by following his, Sanderson's, hunches. He increased his own bet and won. Encouraged, he plunged. His winnings were swept from him. He doubled to even—and lost. He doubled again, and lost.

"I'm offen you," said Billy.

"You're a —— Jonah," Sanderson growled.

"Am I now!" and Billy coppered Sanderson's bet, and Sanderson lost again.

It was unheard of, this four-time losing.

It wasn't unheard of, of course, but one of the idiocies of gambling is that the man who has lost the first bet thinks the chances of winning the second are increased; and that the law of chance is almost bound to give him a winning on the fifth bet if he has lost the four previous. Sanderson had watched the dealer's fingers closely and was satisfied that she was dealing straight. He placed a heavier bet than ever—and lost.

He was now in so deep that he could not quit. He had to win it back or he wouldn't have much of a fortune to carry to the States with him. So he sat himself down to determined, cautious playing. He placed a piker bet for the sixth venture and, of course, won.

His nerve was shaken. He bet small again and won; and the third small bet won. Then he became apprehensive lest after three straight winnings he was due to lose; and so he was afraid to plunge.

Seven times straight he won, and had not recouped the loss of one large bet. He was the more exasperated because Billy Reed had been quick to veer his bets and ride to further winnings on Sanderson's new run of luck. Sanderson determinedly placed a small bet for the eighth time. The problematical chance of winning eight times in succession is small—but the law of mathematics doesn't rule luck. He won.

Men to right and men to the left made sarcastic comment on such nerveless playing. The crowd hates a piker. Under pressure of the contempt of those about him, and fully exasperated, Sanderson plunged once more—and lost. He plunged again and lost. Again and lost. Billy Reed continued to plunge and win.

The girl behind the mask dealt slowly, watchfully. It was remarkable how slowly she dealt—and a slow dealer is never crooked. Many noticed, but Sanderson not at all, that her eyes were steadily on his face. It gave the more observant players the thrill of a drama to see how steadily from the holes of the mask those bright dark eyes peered with sibylline intensity at Sanderson's strained, haggard face.

"She's worn that mask for him—and waited!" said one young man of sensitive perception to a friend.

"You mean——"

"Not necessarily. When a woman's eyes look like that I don't believe she has to cheat. She has too much faith in the justice of God!"

A strange thing to be said in a gambling-house, perhaps; but true. She was letting the cards run as they would. By midnight Sanderson was broke. Gold-dust and certificates to the amount of twenty thousand dollars has slipped from his hand across the table—and most of it had come back again into the hands of Billy Reed.

Reed quietly, secretly, returned his winnings to the house and received his commission; and this was good enough for him to strut about, stand drinks and receive congratulations from the envious who never dreamed that he was a capper.

Frankie Alden, exhausted by the strain, by the tenseness of dealing and watching, arose from the table. Another girl took her place. For a moment Frankie stood staring toward the bar where Sanderson was taking a drink with those about Billy Reed. She carried a derringer inside her waist, and always she had intended to shoot. But now

to shoot would seem a kind of anti-climax.

She went to her room, undressed, got into bed to think. 'Nita came in soon after. It was not one o'clock. She wanted to confide in 'Nita, but the pretty little card-sharper was a bit tipsy, gay, noisy, and in no mood to be serious.

THE NEXT morning, early, there was banging on the door. Cliff Howard, the El Dorado gunman—a decent fellow for all of his reputation and the nature of his work—aroused the girls. Billy Reed had been murdered and robbed. His pouch and diamonds were gone. Did either of them know of any enemies Billy had? Of anybody who might have done it?

Howard—a man of his word—said that the murderer would be strung up or shot if he had to do it himself, alone. Billy Reed was popular in that curious way that fellows, whom other men do not really admire and think a little preposterous, are often popular—especially posthumously.

"Greg Sanderson—the man that dropped his dust bag at my table!" Frankie cried.

"Barkin' up the wrong tree," said Howard a little disappointedly. "He was chummy with Billy, and I figured that him, not knowing Billy was a capper, might 've laid for him. Me and two or three more went over already an' had a talk with the fellow. He's got witnesses to show he wasn't alone with Billy no time."

Frankie did not hesitate, but her face was flushed as though with a kind of passionate earnestness as she cried again:

"But I saw them alone. I was out late. I saw them—in the square. I heard Sanderson ask for a loan. Around—it must 've been after two o'clock!"

"You did!" Howard shouted. "That settles it. We'll search that fellow good." And he bounded away.

'Nita looked at her in amazement, in a daze.

"Frankie, are you crazy? You weren't out of this room last night—after one o'clock. And they'll hang that fellow—just your word! You must ——"

But Frankie flung her story out with hot lips. Perhaps Sanderson did not kill Billy Reed, but he had coldly murdered Jack Stevens—and other men, too—and if he wasn't hanged she herself would search him out and shoot him! She ought to have shot him when first she saw him. He ought to be hanged. She would gladly give her soul to God to judge because of the lie: Greg Sanderson was a murderer, and die he must if she had to kill him!

'Nita was thoughtful for a moment. Her own blood was Spanish, fierce in love, hot in vengeance. She understood. About Frankie's neck she tightened her arms, and in a choking ecstasy of passion, half-sobbed—

"If they ask me, I'll swear I saw him do it—kill Billy!"

The girls sat and talked, impatiently waiting for some one to come and summon Frankie to the trial as a witness. It was a matter of honor among Californians to always have a jury—unless the prisoner confessed—even though at times it would have been suicidal for that jury to report, "Not guilty." Half-hours slipped by. The girls were dead for sleep, and in spite of the tenseness, the excitement, dozed slightly.

Then again the loud rapping and Cliff Howard entered. He was calm. He spoke quietly, with a touch of grimness.

"You were right, Frankie. I pounced him and went through his duds. Found Billy's glassware on him. The pouch too. He caved in. Said he had slipped out of his window after goin' to bed and had laid for Billy. Couldn't imagine how we got on to him. Told him one of our girls saw him in the square—heard him ask for a loan of Billy. Said you were a liar, Frankie. Funny thing, though. I said from the evidence we got it don't appear to me that Frankie Alden lied. God, he crumpled! Just like that.

" 'Frankie Alden,' he says. I said, 'Yes—the monte-dealer that cleaned you!'

"Not another word out of him till just before the boys strung him up. Rope on his neck and hands tied, then he says something funny. He said:

" 'You fellows got me all right. You don't know it, but you're not hangin' me for braining that Reed. You're hangin' me for shootin' Jack Stevens.'

"What do you girls know about a fellow crazy as that?"

But 'Nita shook her head, and Frankie was staring from the window; and neither answered.

KID GLOVES IN THE DISCARD

by Grace P. T. Knudson

QUEER—how in foreign parts a white man will grow careless-like, and give the natives every kind of a chance at his life—and get away with it—up to a certain point. It kind of seems—if you ain't out with a gun for blood, you generally carry your protection somewhere along with you, if you have the wit to use it.

My company was stationed at Davao—on the south coast of Mindanao and about nine hundred miles nearer the hot place than Manila. Captain Rush was the provincial governor. He was sent down there with strict orders to win the natives by kindness. Self-defense—on the testimony of competent witnesses—was the only excuse for a soldier to use violence toward a native. Outside of general orders, Captain Rush had his own fine ideas about handling the little brown brother with kid gloves, and leading him along by hand, out of bead trimmings and into human coats and trousers. For all that, he stood high in the enlisted man's opinion. And—his ideas seemed to work.

Davao was then—and, I'll wager, is now—a pestilential hole of a *nipa* shack settlement. The town, itself, was an organization of civilized Filipinos. Then there were a few old Spanish planters, and an American teacher or two, besides our company. But, the surrounding hills were swarming with a pagan tribe—Bagobos. You hardly ever saw 'em, but they were there. Once in a new moon, a party of 'em would foot it into town and through the streets single-file.

They'd come down to barter bead bags, or mountain oranges, for turkey-red cloth and sulfur matches. They wore knee pants—made out of mottled brown hemp cloth, their women wove—and a short, tight jacket that came about half-way to where it ought to, leaving a belt of natural skin to cinch the pants to. More or less beading, on the pants and jacket, indicated whether the wearer was a Bagobo bank-director, or just a *camote*-digger.

The red cloth the women worked into the beading on their clothes; the matches the men used in their bamboo guns—nobody was allowed to sell 'em powder. Once in a while, they'd blow themselves to a *ganta* of rice. Rice was scarce with 'em. They fed mostly on bananas, wild

hog, and *camotes*—a cross between an Irish potato and a Virginia sweet.

Now, these Bagobos were the fellows Captain Rush was sent down to get hold of—though the Spaniards never reached 'em. It was his task to toll 'em in—by the bait of human kindness—to a law-and-order net. They had their own tribal laws, and, on the whole, were a moral and peaceable set of children. If they had any rows amongst themselves they kept it quiet. But, in the memory of the oldest inhabitant, they hadn't been known to molest any outsiders.

The only thing that seemed to cause any trouble—in the minds of the white residents—was a cheerful little Bagobo custom:

If a man fell ill, the sacrifice of his head servant appeased the gods, and the sick *hombre* got well.

Of course, 'twas a difficult thing to deal with. But, whenever rumors of a human sacrifice reached Governor Rush, out he'd hike for a powwow of *dattos* in the suspected district. Their slow-working minds hadn't grasped the change in Government forms. So, Captain Rush would explain how grieved the King of America—whose deputy he was—would be, if he ever heard of such doings amongst his new brown children; that human sacrifices were not the custom—at least, not in the public highways—in Washington, D. C. If he could once get 'em to promise not to repeat an offense, they'd keep the promise—that was a part of their code.

American-like, he went out to those powwows unarmed and accompanied by only two or three men—also unarmed. Everybody remonstrated, but he always said:

"Under ordinary circumstances, I can depend upon tact and diplomacy to keep 'em on the safe side of the teeter-board. If we went armed, it might give 'em an idea we were afraid of 'em."

He distributed a few discarded brass-buttoned coats, as badges of office, and appointed several *dattos* as sub-deputies to see to it that the king's wishes were considered. Well, he was getting on famously—had even induced some of 'em to send the kids to Davao to learn English in the schools, when the setback came.

A chap by the name of Howell blew into Davao, at the end of the rainy season, off a rotten old Spanish tub—he and his wife.

"G. Remington Howell of the Kentucky Howells, sir," he was fond of introducing himself.

We'd all heard of him—the wireless never had anything on the Philippine atmosphere in those days. Somebody had dubbed him "Gabby" and it stuck.

They'd been knocking about the islands for several years—come out with the first lot of teachers. Gabby tried to run that department; found he couldn't, so resigned. Then it was some petty civil-government job. But being naturally "agin the Government," he didn't stay there long. Then was the time he should have taken his wife home to the States, like a white man. But instead, he went from one thing to another. He was always bragging:

"Some day, don't you know, I'm going to strike it rich, and make a lady out of Mrs. Howell."

Gabby held that he could improve on most of the Lord's work.

But the only rich thing he ever struck was a native gambling-game one night. Regular fool's luck! He won a coconut plantation from a wealthy young native lawyer. The next day, he turned 'round and sold it back to the youngster, for real money. He reckoned he'd be a hemp-planter. So, with the money burning his pockets, and a hemp-bee buzzing in his bonnet, he started prospecting for a plantation site. He'd believe any rosy story.

Somebody, who hadn't seen Mrs. Howell, told him the best hemp land was down Davao way, and, out in the hills, he could buy it cheap of the Bagobos.

His idea of a plantation was to sit on a cool veranda, with the makings of mint juleps in one hand and a magazine in the other. Between drinks and stories he expected to issue orders to his overseer. Then, when Mrs. Howell's native butler announced dinner, he would straighten up his manly five-feet-eleven; comb his silky brown mustache before his pocket-mirror; smooth his abundant locks, and stride into his *punka*-fanned dining-hall, gaily humming, "O, Romeo and Juliet!"

Naturally, we were all curious to see Gabby's wife. Our mess decided it was a sure enough case of attraction between opposites. She was tiny! Not even pretty! But, somehow, she was attractive—at-

tractive as the deuce! A regular boy's head, covered with black curly hair. And, she had a sense of humor that nothing could down, and that all the time twinkled through her brown eyes. Vim was her first name. Nothing bossy about her, either. A little woman, and a lady—we boys all concluded from a distance.

You see, we were enlisted men. But, she was a white woman where white women were scarce and we could play the stray dog and hang 'round just to look at her. She hadn't been in town more than three days before every mother's son in our mess stood ready to biff every other son-of-a-gun who didn't mention her with all reverence. Of course, speculation was pro and con as to why she stuck by Gabby, instead of going home.

We heard that Howell was trying to get the governor's permission to go out into the hills to locate a plantation. In leisure moments, we discussed the situation, and offered free opinions about Gabby and his sanity.

His idea seemed to be to get away where he'd have plenty of room for his enterprise to grow. He expected to own, in the end, all the unoccupied land in the islands, and maybe Borneo. He opined, it would be "exceedingly interesting" to deal with the pagans direct; their ideas of business would be so "utterly uncontaminated" by the white man's view.

ONE day I was ordered to report to Captain Rush. After regulation preliminaries, he said to me—

"Seacrist, you've every earmark of a man—and a gentleman."

Then, he looked out the window of his office into a *cogon* field. I didn't know what to say, so looked to see what he saw. I saw nothing but the beckoning, deceiving *cogon*—typical of the country. You'd think it just innocent, lush grass, but it clutches like a wildcat and marks like a razor, when it once gets hold of a man.

"Seacrist, you're going out into the hills, on detached duty, to take care of Mrs. Howell. You understand! I've put up every kind of argument against their going. But—the fool won't listen! We've told him he can't get any title to land out there; he says, by the time a title is necessary, he'll be able to. We've told him he can't raise hemp at the altitude he wants to go; he has brilliant ideas, and wants to experiment. I've told him it's criminal to take a white woman into these hills; she chips in—loyal soul that she is—and declares she's anxious for a few years of solitude; says the rough work will keep 'em busy and happy, and, if she gets to pining for something to do, she'll start a school for the Bagobo children.

"—— it! I can't say no! I haven't any authority over 'em, so long as they are outside a lunatic verdict! There seems no reason why I should send out an escort with 'em. Yet, I have a feeling I ought to. The Bagobos are peaceable enough, and I don't anticipate trouble. The only thing I fear is that Howell may try to lord it over 'em, or do some stunt they won't understand. He has the tact of a caraboa. In fact, I rather think the beast has the better of Howell—he does know enough to plunge into a mud-hole and keep quiet when he isn't working.

"I can give some man I can trust indefinite leave to hike with Howell's outfit. There may be little brown brothers up there we've never yet seen. It's all strange country. I'm sorry, now, we haven't explored it thoroughly."

He paused. Then continued somewhat hesitatingly:

"I've never owned it before, Seacrist but—man to man—I never go out into those hills—that a tropical-jungle feel don't get under my skin, and make it gooseflesh. Unseen eyes seem watching; disembodied ears are listening; and a loathsome something seems ready to envelop us and suck us into the gloom. Though the nearest dangerous thing we've ever encountered was a foot-long snake. But, I can't seem to rise above the feeling that the danger is there. So, be careful—for the little woman's sake!

"Make friends with Howell. Try to dissuade him from his purpose. If you can't do that—well—give him the scare of his life—for her sake—and send him back to sea-level where he belongs."

A few instructions and he dismissed me.

My uppermost thought was how the boys would envy me. But, by the time I got back to quarters some of Captain Rush's words began to sink an impression. On the whole, though, I didn't take the trip seriously.

I reported to Howell, all a-tremble at

meeting a sure enough white woman. But—I got through—and the first command from my new captain was:

"Now, Mr. Seacrist, we are only out prospecting for two weeks. We have all supplies but two things—a frying-pan and a teakettle. Can't you *busca* 'em for us?"

Sure I could! She might have asked me to pick huckleberries off the coral! 'Twould have been almost as easy. But, I finally compromised on a Chinese frying-pan. Then—as good luck had it—I did find a teakettle. Rooted it out from the back of an old Chino shop. It looked like it had belonged to the Ming family and been used as a football by generations of little Mings. I wrestled with it for a spell on the beach, and you could tell what 'twas intended for.

The morning we started, Captain Rush set us across the bay in his own launch. They dumped us and our dunnage on the sand at a place called Tancalin.

We two men didn't cut much ice by way of looks. But—the little captain was cute enough! A Chino tailor had made her a complete man's outfit—coat and trousers—of khaki. The post commissary had furnished her a pair of canvas leggings, small enough to strap on, after a fashion. She made some boy! We didn't dare let her go into the jungle in skirts.

As we stood there on the beach at Tancalin that morning—waving good-by to the only friends we had, in that part of the world—we were as full of enthusiasm as we were of ignorance of what lay before us. I had fairly caught Howell's optimism, and almost felt like getting rich quick myself.

Howell capered up and down the hard sand like a young calf, threw his cap into the air and exclaimed:

"Gee whiz! It makes a man feel wealthy just to be here and on the road to fortune! Mary," and he turned to the little captain, "permit me to introduce the 'lord of the manor.'" He struck a pose that was ridiculous, and would have been funny, if I hadn't felt that he half-meant what he said.

Mary answered—

"We'll hope, George."

Her tone sobered him, and he led the way along the beach to Don Pablo's place.

The old *Don* was a hemp-planter. He'd been there at Tancalin for years—on the very edge of the Bagobo jungle. He employed some of 'em on his plantation—when he could prevail on 'em to work—money meant nothing to 'em. Captain Rush had told us to go to Don Pablo for reliable carriers. His method of securing them was efficient—whatever it was. By eleven o'clock, a full retinue lined up and salaamed before Howell. One man—acting as interpreter—informed us in mixed—and pretty badly smashed—Spanish and English that they were ready to start.

There were nine of 'em. As pretty a bundle of savages as man ever looked on. They stood in various stages of trousers—or lack of 'em—plantation cast-offs. One or two had the remains of shirts. But, every man Jack of 'em had two razor-edged bolos strapped on to him, and carried a spear in one hand.

I thought to myself—

"Eighteen bolos, and nine spears!"

And, they knew how to hit a bull's-eye with any one of 'em almost as far as I could with my automatic—the only Christian weapon in the crowd. A sense of what Captain Rush said he felt in the jungle waved over me.

WE LEFT Don Pablo with a ceremony of thanks on our part and good wishes on his. He was a polished old fraud! I'd picked up enough Bagobo to overhear his last advice to our interpreter.

Says the interpreter—

"What do they want out there?"

Says the *Don*:

"Just fools of *Americanos*! The Lord only knows what they want! But, take 'em where they want to go—and bring 'em back safe, if you don't want trouble with their Government!"

We paced off the first part of the hike through five miles of *cogon*, sometimes head-high. The last mile was a steady ascent to the edge of the woods. Howell ordered a stop, in the shade of the first trees, for dinner. Before we got there, out from a side path in the *cogon*, a new man joined us and took the lead. From the beads on his clothes, he was a swell. With him came two more bolos and another spear. I caught myself planning how I could best use my automatic in case of trouble. Then Howell seemed to wake up, and called back—

"I say, old man, are you on to the cutlery?"

When we came to rest, Agin—the interpreter—brought along the new man and introduced him as Capacun, son of a *datto*, and indicated him to be boss of the job. The new boss made a long jabber to Agin, who turned to Howell with—

"Capacun wants to know if the small man is a woman, and if American women wear trousers like men."

Howell explained by the sign-and-grunt language. Neither brown face batted an eyelash in approval or disapproval of American wisdom.

In getting dinner, Capacun initiated himself as first assistant to me as cook. The rest of the Bagobos withdrew to one side with their chow. I fished the teakettle out of a pack, filled it with water in a nearby brook, and set it over the fire. Capacun got interested. He examined it inside and out, then squatted to watch it. Occasionally, he'd look at me, point to the teakettle, and smile. Then the darn thing began to sing!

At that he showed signs of fright. He saw I didn't flinch, so he waited and watched like a cat. A puff of steam came from the spout. He went into the air! But I laughed and he squatted again with a sheepish grin on his face. Next I put in some coffee. The crowning touch was when I poured out the brown liquid. He was crazy! He called Agin! After some exciting pantomime and dialogue, I made out that he wanted the dish that talked with water and made magic out of it.

I promised him he should have it when he got all three of us safe back to the beach. It was the only inspiration I ever had. He was satisfied. From then on, he was proud custodian of the teakettle.

The first night we were guests of Datto Unto. The village over which he ruled was about eighteen hundred feet above sea-level, and consisted of one *nipa* shack, on twelve-foot stilts. That was so his dear friends couldn't come up under in the night and jab a playful bolo into his ribs, as he lay asleep on the bamboo floor. Access to the flat was by means of a one-pronged bamboo ladder with toe-holes cut in the sides. At night, this was raised—meaning, "No caller unannounced!"

It was some shack of a flat! One big living-room—eighteen by twenty floor space—a corner kitchenette; and bath in the nearest stream. Howell could stand upright directly under the ridgepole, if he came up between tom-toms—another sign of wealth. This *datto*, being very rich, had seventeen—big and little. A platform, at the far end of the living-room, was the customary apartment of the favorite wife. She got down from her perch—so to speak—in our favor.

The chief tom-tom-banger went to work on the composition of a mess-call. Then the neighbors began to arrive from an invisible somewhere, to share the rice we had distributed. The society column would have put it:

"Sixty-five of the Bagobo élite were present—in and about. The evening was pleasantly spent in powwowing, dancing, and music—the spacious room being picturesquely lit by two pitch torches."

In an aside, Howell asked:

"What do you suppose it's all about? Where would we land, if they should take offense?"

The woman presented the little captain with a pocket-handkerchief-size skirt. Agin advised that Datto Unto wanted the *Americana* to put it on, since the gods of the hills hadn't advanced to the age of equal suffrage. Howell, sure that Agin couldn't understand half that was said to him, answered in mock gravity:

"My compliments to the old guy! Tell him to go chase himself!"

They were as sensitive as bred pups. I could see they had caught Howell's attitude and resented it. Right then, the first real fear got hold of me.

The little captain—played out with the hike—rolled up in her blanket, and went to sleep with all seventeen tom-toms whanging. One by one the neighbors slid into the dark of the forest, and things quieted. I lay and stared at the embers, over in the corner fire-box, until they winked out. Every sense was taut. I kept thinking of Captain Rush's words. Nothing happened. At dawn, we pulled out from Unto's hospitality, and I breathed a long breath.

From there on we were in the jungle. Another man had joined us—Omo by name. Another son of a *datto*—by the sign of the beads.

"Two more bolos and one more spear!" Howell remarked.

He took it as a joke.

Omo ordered himself and toted no pack—

sort of honorary escort. Howell tried to make friends, but had to give him up as an icy proposition.

For three days, we swung into a routine. Don Pablo had told the boys to take us up to a camping-place in the hills. We were going it blind. The little captain was kept busy marveling over the great orchids, the flaming hibiscus trees, and the like. Howell and I speculated on the price of some of the hard-wood giants if they could be transported to sea-level. He was inclined to stray from the main trail. I noticed that Omo always shadowed him. We heard monkeys chattering now and again, but never glimpsed one. After one of his side explorations, Howell asked—

"Seacrist, do you have any feeling of being followed?"

"Sometimes!"

"Well," he said, "out there alone with his icy nibs, just now, I was sure something was on our trail!"

"Monkeys!" I said.

I didn't want to impart my fear to him.

"But—we came across a clump of bamboo with fresh-cut stumps. What do you make of that?"

He ended with a nervous laugh. It was the first indication I'd seen that the jungle was sort of poking at his nerves. I tried to reassure him—and myself.

"Well, I make this of it: these Bagobos are just curious children. Maybe some of 'em are following us, just to see what a white man does."

"Why don't they show themselves?"

"Timid!"

He stuck to the trail after that.

A MEAN drizzle set in the night of the second day. It made things slimy. Toward the end of the next afternoon, the little captain slipped and shot down a steep hill. Before anybody could stop her, she struck the feet out from under Howell, in front. He landed in her lap, and together they slid about four rods. I roared, expecting Howell to see the funny side. But—Gabby jumped up—didn't even help the little woman—and turned on her with one special cussin'-out. It made me mad as a hornet. In another minute, I'd have landed a fist in his face—if he hadn't stopped as sudden as he began.

"I beg your pardon, Mary—and Seacrist's too. To tell the truth—I was so scared I didn't know what I was doing!"

He'd been bottling up his nervousness, and she had plumb scared him when she hit so sudden. I knew how he felt. I'd been at the screaming-point nearly all day, and wondered what in thunder was the matter with me.

About four o'clock of the fourth day we reached a most remarkable glade—I suppose you'd call it. An ice-cold mountain stream flowed through it, over a clean gravel bed. About two rods back, on leveled ground, was a rough camp. It looked like it had been recently deserted. The floor was laid of real sawed boards. Near the camp was a banana grove, a *camote* patch, and remains of a garden with corn stubble at one end. To the south, the trees had been cut away and there was a clear view of Davao Bay and the sweep of the Pacific beyond. We tried to question Capacun but got only—

"White men."

Later, back of the camp, we found a rough tile with part of the story cut in—

Steinhoch & Mulbohm, June 8, 19—, aneroid reading 6,450 feet.

Back in Davao, an old Spanish priest told us two Germans had spent near two years up there; they experimented with garden vegetables and marked all the high altitudes.

Well, the Bagobos made camp. Then, Capacun informed us they were going to leave.

"Very well," says Howell. "When'll you be back?"

"Never," says Capacun.

"But, you can't leave us way up here! We can never find the trail back!"

They were convinced they could and would leave us.

I mentally thanked the stars! I'd blazed the trail as we came along.

"But," said Howell, "you've got to stay here! If you don't, every man of you goes into the calaboose when we do get back to Davao! Why won't you stay?"

It was too cold for Bagobos—we were way above their limit of habitation.

"Cold or no cold you've got to stay!" was Howell's conclusion.

Upon that, up steps Omo. He jabbered so fast for about five minutes that all I could catch was—

"Pigs of *Americanos*!"

Howell knew that much, too, and it made him furious. For he knew 'twas the biggest insult a Bagobo could give. Being nervous as a colt, he up and slapped Omo's impudent brown face.

My heart stopped just under my thick skull. I jumped for Mrs. Howell, with a hand mighty near my automatic. Capacun was on the job. He lunged in between Omo and Howell. It was a picture! Omo with spear leveled at Howell's heart, and Capacun's bolo poised to launch Omo's soul into eternity. 'Twas touch and go for a few seconds. Nobody breathed! Then, somehow, the tension snapped. Omo sneered like a white man, dropped the tip of his spear to the ground, and turned away with contempt written in every move. He was ripe for a spanking, but I had to remember the little captain was there.

Capacun explained.

"Bad Bagobo!"

We got supper and the atmosphere seemed to clear. Toward morning it was so peaceful, even I went to sleep. I was done up. When we woke, what did we find? No Bagobos; no chow. The camp was cleaned out!

Our faithful friend, and his teakettle, turned up in season to temper the wind of dismay to us shorn lambs. He brought with him some coffee and a can of peaches. Having no choice in the matter, we breakfasted on peaches, and took a bracer of black coffee. You can believe we needed the bracer!

We were about at the finish of our meal, when a monkey chattered off in the distance. Capacun stopped chewing to listen. Another chatter came from another direction. Capacun seized the teakettle. Then he made us understand we were to follow him.

"Shall we trust him?" asked Howell of me.

The little captain spoke up—

"He's saved your life once already, George!"

So, I answered:

"Trust the woman's intuition. If there's any danger we don't know what it is, anyway."

Capacun plunged ahead into the jungle; Howell next; after him the little captain; I brought up the rear—automatic ready. At a double-quick trot we chased the leader some distance and brought up at a small waterfall. Through it he went—signing for us to do the same.

"Here goes!" says Howell. "You stand guard until I call, Seacrist."

In an instant we heard—

"Come on in!"

The little captain—game as a fighting-cock through everything—ducked her head, and disappeared without a question. I stuffed my gun and cartridge-belt inside my shirt, and followed. If we hadn't all been on the lookout for something terrible to happen any minute, we'd have enjoyed the experiences of the next few minutes. We stood in an arch of solid rock. A curtain of water fell in front, about two inches thick and six feet wide. But, there were other wonders of nature yet before us. The arch led back and narrowed to a hole, large enough to crawl through on hands and knees. Into it we cautiously ventured—after Capacun and his teakettle.

We probably crawled five or six yards before Capacun spoke the one word of English we had taught him—

"Stand!"

By the uncertain light of matches, we made a hasty examination of where we'd arrived. Then Capacun, the wizard, materialized a pine torch.

We stood in a dry cave—almost a perfect dome of limestone. Howell could barely stretch to the top and touch his finger-tips. It might have been thirty feet long and half as wide. Two tunnels led in a direction opposite to where we'd come in. Capacun vetoed exploration, and it seemed safe to follow his lead, considering circumstances thus far. We made ourselves as comfortable as three miners bound a-top a charge of dynamite, watching the fuse burn nearer and wondering what next. Even Howell was quiet! Capacun slipped away into the spooky shadows. But he left the teakettle. Three hours dragged out. We were fidgety.

Howell startled the wind nearly out of us by breaking a long silence.

"I can't stand this any longer! I'm going out the way we came in!"

He was stubborn about it.

"Might as well go out and see what's up, as stay here and go crazy!"

Then he turned to the little captain with—

"Tell you one thing, Mary—if we ever get out of this alive I'm going home!"

"To Davao?" asked Mary.

"No!" He fairly exploded. "Kentucky in the U. S. A.!"

I followed him to the opening and tried to make him take my automatic. But he snapped at me:

"You may need it more than I will! I don't believe there's any danger, anyway! You take care of Mrs. Howell while I find some way out of this —— black hole!"

I'd have been embarrassed to death if the little captain hadn't taken it in a matter-of-fact way.

"Let him go. He'll come back right quick."

But—he didn't!

IT WAS the longest and darkest day I ever hope to spend! I didn't dare leave the little captain alone, and we we didn't dare venture out of the cave, for fear of missing Howell, or Capacun, or both, and getting into a worse muddle.

So, we waited in awful suspense. How the little captain ever survived it, I don't yet understand.

But—about night Capacun turned up with another can of peaches, some uncooked rice, and a note to me from Howell, written in pencil on the leaf of a pocket memorandum.

The note was some staggerer!

I read it. Evil-tasting words crowded into my mouth; but, I choked 'em back. The fumes of 'em got into my brain and I saw red. If I could have got my hands on him!

This was it:

I'm hotfooting it over the back trail for Tancalin. Capacum says he will lead you and Mrs. Howell out by a short cut. Better start at once. He says there's a native war-party out watching us. It seems they have taken objection to Mrs. Howell wearing the pants. So, if we leave at once there'll be no trouble. If you don't overtake me before you get to the sea, don't be alarmed. I shan't let the grass grow under my feet. See you later, By-by!

I couldn't take in how any man—coward though he was—could leave his own wife to the care of a stranger. I felt sorry and ashamed for the little captain, and made it as easy for her as I could by explaining:

"Howell says, we're to follow Capacun out on to the trail, and he'll be waiting somewhere along for us."

We hustled through our second meal for the day on canned peaches, then followed Capacun out one of the side tunnels into the moonlit jungle trail. It was like reaching heaven, to be in the open once again. A surprizingly good open trail helped us do a fast clip over a down-grade. Just before day-dawn, when the moon waned, we camped in the bottom of a cañon.

The little captain—pretty near tuckered out by this time—protested her ability to watch with me, when I rolled my coat for a pillow and told her to go to sleep. She finally consented to lie down. She couldn't help dozing off. The next thing I knew, Capacun shook me by the shoulder, and it was day.

He had drawn water from rattan stems and cooked the rice in that teakettle while we slept.

Hunger made that unsalted boiled rice taste like a full-course Thanksgiving dinner. It gave us new strength for the sober earnest hike before us.

About noon we made a stop to rest. Then it was the little captain turned to me.

"Mr. Seacrist, I want to see that note."

Gee! Didn't I wish I'd destroyed it! But, like the clumsy fool I was, I handed it over to her, and turned my back while she read it.

"Mr. Seacrist!"

"Yes, Mrs. Howell."

"You've known all the time we wouldn't overtake him!"

"Well—not exactly—I thought——"

"No, you didn't!"

She stamped her little foot at me and dismembered that note like a young savage. When she spoke next, she was quiet and cold. I felt sorry for Howell!

Dark was falling when we got to Don Pablo's. Maybe I wasn't feeling some thankful about then!

The old *Don* heard us, and came out to the porch, calling—

"*Buenos noches!*"

When he discovered who it was:

"Good! Good! It is the small *señora!*"

He peered expectantly into the dusk behind us, and asked—

"Where is the Señor Howell?"

The little captain sort of tossed her head and spoke right up:

"Isn't Mr. Howell here? Hasn't he been here?"

"The Señor Howell is not here—has not been here."

We looked at one another. I was knocked silly! In a flash my wits came! I'd been so top-lofty—in the conceit that the safety of the bunch depended upon me and my automatic—and so hidebound by my own petty judgment, that I'd have creaked like the deuce if I'd stooped to recognize a mere human man. It takes longer to tell than it did to think it. I shot at Don Pablo—

"Ask that beggar where Howell is!"

I couldn't trust my own knowledge of the language to cope with the occasion—it was too momentous.

The answer was what I expected:

"Probably in the cave. He stayed to mislead a party of bad Bagobos; to give you and the small *señora* the chance to get out of the hills in safety. You are to bring the soldiers to him."

THANKS to Capacun, the faithful, we made a record of fifty-six hours—from the cave, and return with twenty-three of the boys.

We picked old Gabby up outside the cave. He was breathing. Five of us were told off to give him first-aid and hustle him down to the post hospital. The rest of the boys scoured the hills, rounded up thirty Bagobos—including friend Omo—and brought 'em in to the civil authorities in Davao to be tried on a charge of brigandage and attempted murder.

Old Gabby'd been up against it even harder than we were able to surmise. When he left us in the cave, on his reconnoitering trip, he stumbled on the war-bunch and Capacun watching 'em. By signs and grunts and a few words of Bagobo, he got the story. The promise of that teakettle pulled stronger than tradition and race loyalty with Capacun. Howell played up that fact to get the beggar to take the little captain and me out of the hills.

Why didn't he steal the teakettle? Because a Bagobo never steals! They'd only hid our supplies. Can you beat it? Also—a Bagobo never lies! That helped old Gabby get his information—and, if we'd thought to ask any questions, Capacun would have told us the truth.

Those superstitious rats had chased us all the way from Datto Unto's. They intended to kill us, in our sleep—just so there'd be no fuss—when we'd settled in camp. Thought that would be far enough away from the seat of Government to avoid trouble. They objected both to the *Americano* invasion of their domain, and the style of the little captain's clothes. Old Gabby's insult to Omo had completed the injury, and fired their anger.

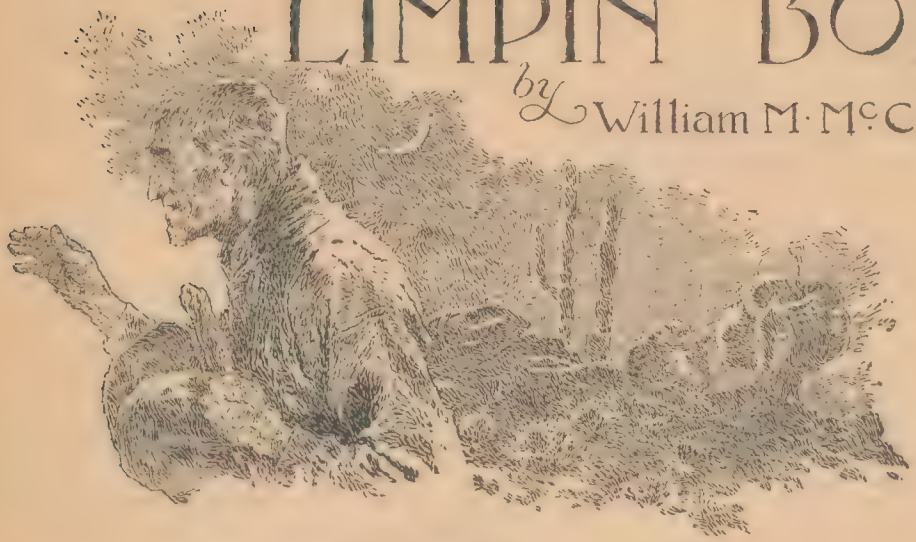
Howell went back to the cave as soon as we got away. In the dark, he staved 'em off for near seventeen hours, by keeping up a dialogue with himself in three voices. Finally, he was too hoarse to speak and so exhausted he went to sleep. Then, they probably discovered he was alone. Anyway, they smoked him out, in the end, and attacked him in the open. Capacun had left him one bolo and he used it with fair success—considering he'd never had any bolo-practise.

DID he go back to Kentucky?

Well—as I've intimated—he proved himself a man—not a demi-god. For all I know, he and the little captain are still prospecting out in the Philippines.

LIMPIN' BOB

by William M. McCoy



Author of "On the Wings of the Morning"

THE dry mouth of Crater Cañon split Skeleton Hill near its northern end, opening in quenchless thirst toward the mirage floating alluringly above the Devil's Frying-Pan. Half a mile to the south a long arm of the Skeleton sprawled, a ragged headland rising out of dancing waves of heat.

Up the southern slope of the steep, crooked ridge, a man and two burros climbed beneath a pitiless midafternoon sun. Red, brown, and gray rocks rolled beneath their feet in the crumbly sand, stunted greasewood forced detours to right or left, and the man's left leg dragged as if its weight were almost more than he could lift; but their slow progress was steady.

"Wake up now, you Hannibal!" called the man, whacking the rump of a burro packed with two water-casks. "You long-eared varmint, don't you know there's scheelite in that sack 'tween those kegs you're totin'? And you saw the ledge it come out of—streaks o' yellow in that rock as wide as your ears!"

He stopped speaking, for the lead burro, packed with grub, bed, and camp duffle, had turned aside to investigate a bush which had caught his fancy.

"Shake a leg, you Cæsar! We're in a hurry, we got to celebrate our strike."

And the club whacked the humped-in rump. For a few rods the burros climbed so briskly that the lame man scrambled pantingly to keep up with them.

"Wait'll I show the boys in Cottonwood what's in that sack!" the man mused for perhaps the thousandth time, when the pace had again become easier. "You old jacks can hire the best room in 'Freighter Joe's' stable, an' order up anythin' you like. Yes sir, corn, oats, barley! Suit yourselves. And me? Oh, it's been a mighty dry year with me, but you just watch 'Limpin' Bob' when we hit Cottonwood! Then, when my dust is all settled, and the dry soaked out o' my insides, we'll get some teams an' snake that stuff over to the railroad, an' watch folks' eyes pop!"

For a little the trio climbed in silence, and then the persuader resounded upon Hannibal's ribs.

"Can't you get it through your thick skull!" chided the man querulously. "And you saw the ledge! What's that you say? It was in lime an' granite formation, an' likely to pinch out? Yes, 'twas, but sufferin' snakes, that ledge was ten feet wide and half a mile long! I've told you a hundred times that we're rich. We got to hurry up an' get irrigated an' fed up. We'd hit straight for Cottonwood, but you know how it is; Ellen wants us to take a look at Crater Cañon first. Folks think Limpin' Bob's got a crack in his lid," he

chuckled. "They say we see ghosts an' spirits, an' chase 'em around the desert. But shucks! That's only because they don't know Ellen like we do. They can't see her, so they say Limpin' Bob is locoed." And he laughed shrilly, whacking Hannibal in his exuberant appreciation of the joke.

"What's that, Cæsar? Yes, sometimes Ellen is hard to understand, same as other women," he admitted. "You needn't shake your head that way, Hannibal. I know what you're thinkin'. Yes, she sent us scurryin' for Salt Springs a spell back, an' up an' changed her mind before we got there, an' put us to scratchin' sand for Coyote Wells. And we didn't find anythin' when we got there. I guess maybe we were a little slow, but we did the best we could."

The last few yards of the ascent were steeper, and the burros floundered as he plied his club.

"Yes, Ellen, I'm hurryin'," he said softly. "We'll be there in a jiffy now."

The summit gained, he looked into the vacant desert cañon, and a vague disappointment grew in his eyes.

"What is it, Ellen?" he questioned, sweeping the desert with his glance, his hand horizontal below his eyes to shield them, not from the direct sun, but from its blinding reflection.

Below him the sweep of greasewood, sand, and rock dropped steadily to the eastward until it disappeared beneath the mirage hovering over the sink of the Frying-Pan. Away to the north a hill humped up, like a pink camel at rest. The Skeleton sprawled on his left, a diabolical scramble of lifeless cañons, peaks, and craters.

"Yes, Ellen, I'm tryin'," the lame man murmured.

With patient intentness he studied the vacancy bit by bit. A half-defined road swung around the northern end of the hill, and something just beyond the end of the Skeleton's arm caught the searcher's eye.

"Is that it, Ellen?" he asked excitedly. "Gosh!" he finally exclaimed. "One o' them gasoline burros! So that's it, Ellen. No wonder we were too slow to catch up with the contraption before. But it's stalled now, and we'll soon meet up with it."

Heading his little caravan for the automobile, he urged Hannibal and Cæsar to top speed.

If Limping Bob had had the old family Bible which had been kept on the sitting-room table in his father's home, so that it would be handy for family prayers, he could have proved his age. But it would have been hard to believe even the Bible, for according to its records, Robert Friend Drake was forty-eight years old—and he looked sixty-eight, a bent, worn, crippled sixty-eight.

Twenty-four years on the desert, following the vampire's lure of riches on the morrow, had dried his flesh on his bones, and the drag of his withered leg and constant searching, searching, had put both age and a hump in his thin back. His overalls and denim shirt had been washed so often that there was no color left in them, except in the patches, made of other materials, and located in prominent spots. His long face was the color of weathered wood, but it was cleanly shaven, finely chiseled, and the eyes, far back in the centers of spider-web wrinkles, were the eyes of a dreamer.

"Now what you got to say, you varmint of a Cæsar?" he laughed excitedly, his eyes burning. "You used to laugh at me, same as other folks did, 'cause I shaved regular, just as if I expected to meet a lady that day. And you Hannibal, you know tarnation well how often you've cussed me 'cause I washed my clothes in the water you had toted so far. Oh, that's all right, I knew you were jokin' all the time! O' course I knew you wanted me to look like a white man when I met Ellen under the stars of an evenin'. We've caught up with this contraption at last an'— What's that, Ellen?" he asked more softly. "Hurry, you say? I'm doin' my best, Ellen, I'm slow, maybe, but I'm doin' my best," and he scrambled pantingly after his burros.

Coming out of the draw far down the arm, the burros shied and stopped, swinging their ears forward in mild curiosity. Bob Drake raised his cudgel, but it slid from fingers suddenly nerveless.

"Ellen!" he gasped. "Ellen!"

And he covered his eyes with trembling hands, staggering against the nearest burro.

A GIRL of perhaps eighteen lay crumpled in the sand before him. Her fair, loosened hair partly covered her face. Dark circles ringed her closed eyes, and her swollen lips cried mutely for

water. But for many moments Drake leaned against the burro, trembling, his eyes covered. At last he looked again at the still figure of the young woman, her worn clothing torn and disheveled. Gathering courage, but mumbling brokenly, Limping Bob Drake hobbled a few steps, and reached out a hand to touch her.

"She's real!" he gasped. "Ellen! Ellen!" he choked, as he tore the canteen from the pack.

Slipping his thin old arms about the girl, he lifted her head, and poured a little of the water between her lips. Her eyelids fluttered while he watched, but she was too ill to feel or notice the muscular convulsion which shook the old cripple's frame when he looked full into her brown eyes.

Striving to make his callous-crusted hands gentle, he gave her more water, then ripped the pack off Cæsar, spread his blankets on the sand, gently laid the girl on them, and propped up his strip of tarpaulin so that it shaded her. When he had given her a little more water, her lips moved, and he bent close.

"Father is—is over by the car!" she whispered, and a strange fire kindled in Limping Bob's eyes.

Leaving the canteen beside the girl, Drake slowly walked the half-mile to the machine. Beyond it a man lay face down in the sand. For a moment Bob stood looking down at the prostrate figure, his old eyes flashing, his muscles twitching queerly. He half turned away, hesitated, stooped, and rolled the man over on his back.

"Dead!" he mumbled. "Been dead some hours."

He turned to examine the automobile, as if searching for something, apparently forgetful of the dead man in the sand, who, in spite of shabby clothes, carried even in death an air of florid elegance, a haunting sense of vanished power.

"Water gone, gas gone; grub gone!" mused Drake as he leisurely continued his inspection. "Both hind tires flat. Whole outfit wore out. Here we are!" he chuckled mirthlessly, discovering what he had been searching for.

Walking around to the side of the machine nearest the man in the sand, Limping Bob seated himself on the running-board, a bottle in his hand.

"The trail's been mighty long, but we've met up again! Here's how, Martin Channing!" and he tilted the bottle to his lips. "That's good stuff, Martin. S'prized that I drink it? I didn't drink with you the last time we met, did I? No, you filled me full of lead—gave me this draggin' leg, that time. But that was long years ago, Martin. It's easy to see they were long enough for you to run through your money. And you lost Ellen eighteen years ago. Yes, it has been eighteen years since she died; your memory's poor. Always was. But I know, for when she was free she came to me. Her spirit found me in the desert.

"And we've been happy! You don't understand? I don't suppose you can, but we have, just us two, alone in the desert. Sometimes she comes and sits by my camp-fire. Other times we walk together under the stars. And now her baby is mine! Her baby who has grown up to be so much like Ellen that finding her like I did gave me an awful shock. I thought for a spell that folks were right when the said Limpin' Bob was locoed.

"Yes, I've got Ellen, an' her baby, an' I'm rich. Yes, Limpin' Bob is rich! Sounds funny, don't it? It's been a long trail, but a long trail's sure to wind and climb some time, Martin! Have a snort?" he questioned, extending the bottle to the man lying in the sand. "Won't drink with me? Well, no offense. This has got to be a sort of farewell shot for me too, bein's I've got Ellen's baby to look after now. Here's to you, Martin; here's hopin' you have a pleasant evenin' with the coyotes!"

He drank sparingly from the bottle, lowered it, tilting it until the liquor gurgled out into the sand.

Tossing the empty bottle aside, Drake got up and hobbled back to the girl. She appeared to be asleep, but he saw that she had taken at least one drink from the canteen. Pulling up several stunted greasewood bushes he soon had a fire sputtering, and the pungent smoke, drifting across the girl's face, woke her. In silence she watched him prepare a meal over his tiny blaze, while the sun dropped close to the rim of the dead hills. With awkward hands he fed her hot canned broth to the accompaniment of husky promises that she would soon feel better.

He had to tell her that her father was dead. While he desperately sought for the right words her eyes asked steadily,

and when he could stand it no longer he blurted it out. She cried, of course, but this was only one more calamity heaped upon a stunned mind, and it was the look of fear, of loneliness, that came into her eyes that cut into the withered man's heart. He tried brokenly to comfort her, searching for words which would not come.

"I knew your mother," he said at last, "and her name was Ellen. Tell me yours."

"Marjorie—Marjorie Ellsworth Channing. And I'm alone now—alone—mother died when I was born!"

"Yes, I know," he whispered. "But you are not alone, Marjorie, you've got——"

"But I am!" she insisted dully. "I have no one left. I can just remember Grandmother Ellsworth. Then I was sent to private schools, and—and I have always lived in schools, until last Spring. Father lost all his money then. His friends turned against him. He couldn't pay—I wanted to be with him," she corrected, with a pitiful flash of pride, "to help him win back what he had lost. Father tried to promote some mines, and we went to awful places, Salt Springs, Coyote Wells, all sorts of places.

"But father could not persuade people to put up money in his mines—and—and what little we had gave out. Father thought he might have better luck in Cottonwood, and we tried to go there, but our food and gasoline gave out here, four days ago! I don't think father drank any water! We had only a little—he made me drink some every four hours. It gave out yesterday! There was a little whisky, but father would not let me touch it. At night he drank some of it, but he said it would kill——"

"He didn't drink any water—he saved it all for you?" asked Drake in surprize, interrupting.

"Yes," she said. "Father was always good to me—in his way, but I never knew him very well. And now I'm alone—and— Oh, I'm afraid! I don't know how to do anything—anything! I'm not a baby," she sobbed. "I wanted to learn something—something, useful—but——"

"You mustn't worry about bein' alone, Marjorie," he told her clumsily. "Maybe I ain't much to brag on, but you've got me! I've struck it rich, an'——"

"You!" she gasped. "I've got you! I don't even know your name! I can't take money—can't live—I— You can't mean to take advantage of——"

"You go too fast for an old man," he interrupted. "I knew your mother, and I——"

"But I can't live on your bounty just because you knew my mother."

"You don't understand," he protested, speaking slowly to gain time to solve his problem. "I knew your mother, an' your father," he began again briskly, having found the answer. "Your father and me were sort of partners a long time ago," he lied, and hurried on. "We had some claims, scheelite, an' stuff like that. They were not much good then, but since the big war the stuff is almost better than gold. These claims——"

"Who are you?" she asked, lifting herself on one elbow.

"Limpin' Bob," he told her, "Limpin' Bob Drake. But I'd like you to call me—could you call me Uncle Bob, Marjorie?"

"And you and father were partners? These claims are valuable. Why didn't father go to you, or you come to him?"

"I've been lookin' for him for a long time," he lied again, the gathering shadows veiling his eyes, and baffling her probing glance. "I missed you at Salt Springs, and again at Coyote Wells. I'm pretty slow, I guess. Maybe he expected to find me at Cottonwood. I was fixin' to go there, an' get ready to open up the mine. On the desert partners don't go in for papers, an' agreements in writin', an' such things, but half that mine is yours just the same. I'll work it, but your share'll take care of you. You can trust your father's old partner, Marjorie?"

"I—I—" she hesitated, her eyes feverishly searching his in the twilight; and then, "I want to, Uncle Bob!" she sobbed, reaching her hands to him.

CLUMSILY he sought to comfort and quiet her, but before she loosened her clasp upon his hardened hands and slept, utterly weary, the desert stars were bright. Stealthily he crept away, took pick and shovel from his kit, and hobbled to the grim presence beyond the automobile. For long he worked, stopping only to curse the coyotes, but when he finished a mound of rock marked a grave safe from wind or jackals.

With a sigh of weary relief Limping Bob

cast aside his shovel, and half straightened up, peering into the desert about him. From the lip of one of the Skeleton's craters shrill howls pierced the night. Furtive eyes flashed here and there, only a few yards away in the greasewood. Hurling imprecations and stones, Drake drove back the jackals for the moment, shouldered his tools, and stood looking down at the new grave, his battered old hat in his hand.

"I'm sorry for some things I said, Martin," he apologized. "You were good to her—you gave her all the water—that makes a lot of difference. An' she's restin' easy. You needn't worry, I'll get her out safe. She's young, and even now sort of proud inside. Somehow she couldn't understand, and to make her mind easy I had to lie a little, maybe, but we were sort of partners. We both loved Ellen—you in your way, and I in my way. Yes, we were sort of partners, Martin."

An hour before daylight Drake woke the sleeping girl, and gave her the last of the broth to drink while he packed Cæsar with one water-cask, and half the food and camp duffle. Out of the bedding he contrived a saddle, and helped Marjorie to mount Hannibal. Then the little caravan skirted the northern edge of Skeleton Hill, and struck west across the undulating desert.

The stars in the cold sky lost their piercing sharpness, grew round and sleepy, and then closed their eyes. Sky and desert met ahead in a long jagged line, with ghostly white shapes drifting lazily above it. Suddenly a towering cloud which seemed just over the next rise flamed red as if it were on fire, a round lava knob pierced the cloud, drained the color from it, and above the glowing peak the cloud gleamed spotless against limitless blue. The sun had looked over the rim of the desert.

When the new day was an hour old, Bob made camp and cooked breakfast. With the aid of his shovel-handle, pick, and tarpaulin, he fashioned a shelter from the sun, and spread his bed beneath it. When he had brought Marjorie a little of the precious water to bathe her face and hands, he reverently helped her remove her boots and some of her clothing, and made her comfortable in the shaded bed.

Telling her not to worry, that he would be back at noon, he disappeared with Hannibal. Almost on time he came hobbling back, and the burro carried the rest of the water, food, and outfit, together with Marjorie's suit-case, taken from the deserted automobile. Lying down with his head and shoulders in the shade at Marjorie's feet, the old cripple was instantly asleep.

When Drake opened his eyes again the sun was splashing the west with all the colors he had collected in his day's journey. Purple mountains rolled lazily over the far horizon to the right; to the left jagged peaks, flaming as if in anger, marked the end of the world; and straight ahead the desert stretched to meet the sky, a river of ashes flowing from a volcano of color.

The royal robe was snatched from the purple mountains, and they humped away to the end of sight, a sulky, slaty blue. The flame went out of the jagged peaks as if their anger were slowly dying, and suddenly the dead river of ashes glowed with life, colors played hide and seek among the greasewood clumps, and the wastes flashed back amethyst and gold to the sky's flaming orange and scarlet.

Then only the sky was alive, and the desert drew about herself a robe of mystery, a robe too illusive to be grasped, but whose caress was felt by hand, cheek, eye, and soul. The far peaks were clear, but close to the desert's bosom the next clump of greasewood was an indefinable shape, and rocks were softened into shadows.

Marjorie was feverish and weak, but her smile was brave, and the look in her eyes set Drake to muttering to himself over his supper-fire. Marjorie dressed while he cooked. Tonight he could provide only coffee, flapjacks, and bacon—rough food, but there was strength in it. In her weariness and feverish weakness Marjorie had ceased to be hungry, but she dutifully ate as much of the coarse fare as she could.

Methodically Limping Bob packed half his outfit on Cæsar, put the blanket-saddle on Hannibal, and for half the night the little caravan struggled through the crumbly sand and rolling rocks under the desert stars. When it was evident that Marjorie, despite her brave determination, could go no farther, Bob made camp.

Back over the wastes he labored when Marjorie had fallen asleep, for the rest of the water and kit. It was not far to Cottonwood, as distances are reckoned on the desert, but there was no water between,

and with Marjorie so weak and sick he had no idea how long it would take him to reach the oasis.

The sun had just bounded over the desert's brink when he hobbled into camp and bent over the girl in the tarpaulin's shelter. Fever glowed in her cheeks and eyes, but in her look there was something Bob Drake could not read. He wondered why it clutched his throat. She tried to smile, and held out her hands to him.

"Oh! Uncle Bob!" she said huskily, tears blinding her as she drew his thin old face to her own.

While he groped for words of comfort, her arms found their way around his skinny neck, and she clung, sobbing, and he stuttered husky, unintelligible words.

"Why are you so good to me?" she asked when she could control her voice. "I trust you, Uncle Bob, but I keep wondering so many things. I was dying in the sand and you came to me, and you have been so—oh, so good! And you say you were father's old partner, and that half this claim was his, and that that makes his share mine now. But father never spoke of you—I try and try but I can't—can't——"

"You must believe your Uncle Bob, Marjorie," he interrupted, "and not worry about anything. When you are strong again it will be easy for you to understand—now you must just trust me. And you must not get excited. It won't do, with your fever and all, away out here in the middle of nowhere."

And he released himself tremblingly.

WHILE the sun poured searing blasts from his furnaces upon the desert, and hill and plain wavered dizzily in the heat, Marjorie's fever increased. She moved restlessly upon her pallet in the shade of the tarpaulin, she looked without recognizing, and now and then she babbled of things long past, or talked in fancy with her mother or father. All day Limping Bob hovered over her, clumsily bathing her face, or giving her water to drink, his calloused old hands trembling and awkward in their earnestness to be tender.

When the west had at last sucked the day into a whirlpool of barbaric color, and the desert had drawn her robe of dusk over her breast, the fever began to fade from Marjorie's eyes, and coherence came into her words. Telling her he wanted to round up the burros, Drake hobbled away. He had to talk to something, and when he located the pair where they were prospecting for supper, he stated the case, giving an inventory of food and water on hand, outlined Marjorie's condition, and asked for advice. Hannibal bit off a greasewood twig and chewed its end thoughtfully.

"Maybe you're right, Hannibal," considered old Bob. "Maybe it's best for us to move on, just as you say. What's that, Cæsar? If we don't get her some place where she can have the right sort of grub and nursing, we'll be diggin' another grave in the desert. Don't talk about it. We've got to get her out! We must hit for Cottonwood, an' keep goin', you say, Hannibal? That's more like it, but I'm afraid she can't stand it. She's game, but she's mighty sick. What did you say, Cæsar? You agree with Hannibal. You think we ought to move on as far as we can. Well, maybe you boys are right—I guess you are right. Come on back to camp now. We'll be starting."

At midnight Marjorie was no longer able to cling to the burro's back, and Drake called a halt. Spreading a blanket on the ground, he placed her upon it, and she lay still and wan under the stars, only half-conscious. When he had given her water to drink, old Bob shuffled off to where the burros browsed a few rods away.

"What's our move now?" he asked, despair in his thin old voice, and for a little time he discussed ways and means with the pair, but for once the three could not formulate a satisfactory agreement.

Then Bob hobbled a little way into the desert, where only the stars could watch. In a few minutes he came back.

"We'll move on," he said, a strong note in his voice. "Ellen says we must. That we must go, an' keep on goin' until Marjorie is safe. I told her she could depend on us."

Lifting Marjorie upon Hannibal's back, Drake shouted to Cæsar, and the caravan struggled through the greasewood, with Bob floundering beside Hannibal while he held the girl upon the blanket-saddle. Hour after hour they threaded the undulating desert in a little cloud of invisible, choking dust. Limping Bob's strength ebbed until his withered leg dragged as if it were shackled to worlds. The swish

of feet through sand and greasewood sagged, quickened, and sagged again, but went on unendingly.

Marjorie was unconscious, but when the stars at last went to sleep, and a dead gray light drifted across the desert, Drake nodded in panting approval, for dark shapes loomed far ahead, ghostly guardians standing in irregular lines. The caravan wavered on. The shapes became cottonwood trees. The mystery they were guarding evolved into a desert meadow of alfalfa with a bit of orchard in one end. And just beyond the oasis the town of Cottonwood sprawled out of the semi-darkness, built haphazard about a box-like railroad station.

FREIGHTER JOE clumped out the back door of his little home under the cottonwoods, filled a tin basin with water, placed the basin on a bench beside the steps, and vigorously performed his morning ablutions. Thoroughly awake, he studied the new day with more interest as he dried his face and hands on a rough towel. In the fresh light his little principality gleamed like a jewel—and it was a jewel, a jewel of great price, for Joe and Anna Young had bought it at the price of thirty years' incessant labor.

Together they had planted the cottonwoods before the railroad was dreamed of, brought the meadow under cultivation a bit at a time, developing a little more water every year from the spring, until now the fields supported his stock, and gave him feed to sell in a land where all other hay and grain must come by the railroad.

His long teams clanked out into the desert and came creaking back with ore from distant mines, ore which must be shipped again, but there was nearly always ore, and ore meant work, and work was what Freighter Joe asked of the world.

As he walked toward his corrals his eyes swept the surrounding wastes. He paused a moment as if his eye had caught something, started on, then stopped short with an oath of surprize. A moment later his yell brought his wife to the door, while he rushed into the greasewood.

Limping Bob could not speak, his eyes were set fixedly upon the house in the oasis, and as he floundered beside Hannibal, desperately struggling to hold the unconscious Marjorie upon the saddle of blankets, he did not seem to see or hear the man rushing to meet him. Brushing Bob aside, Freighter Joe lifted Marjorie in his long arms, and shuffled through the sand at a trot toward the house. Cæsar, Hannibal, and old Bob trailed behind.

How much longer the trail was Limping Bob never remembered. When he awoke it was evening, he was in a clean cot in a little lean-to room, and a woman was sitting beside him. He saw her hands first, worn hands, resting in her lap. Curiously, he looked higher, and found a wondrously kind face, with eyes and lips smiling.

"Caesar an' Hannibal—have they been fed? I promised 'em a celebration—corn, oats, everythin'," he muttered, and then recognition and full awakening came to him.

"Where is she, Anna?" he asked anxiously. "Is she—is——"

"She's safe, Bob," she told him. "She's a long ways from being well, but she's young, and she'll pull through this. It's nursing that'll count, and I'll give her that. And Hannibal and Caesar!" She stopped to laugh. "They've had their celebration and are sleeping it off now! They managed to get into the alfalfa, and gorged themselves before Joe found them. Yes, they had a regular spree! You be quiet now. I'll bring you your supper."

But Bob Drake was a son of the desert, and refused to have such frills as supper in bed tried out on him. Over the heartening meal in the kitchen with his two old friends, Bob told his story—all of it.

"It was right to her, Bob, tellin' her that you was her paw's old pardner," agreed Freighter Joe. "It'll make things a heap easier for her.

"Yes," acquiesced Mrs. Young, "she can feel that she's some right to take what you give. Then folks wouldn't understand. There's mighty few of 'em like you, Bob. The way you've fixed it, nobody can question things. But if you told 'em the truth, some folks would say things that hurt with a hurt that never stopped."

"There's one thing about it all that's eating me now," puzzled Bob, "and that is that she don't quite believe me. She trusts me, and wants to believe everything, but it seems like both me and a mine tookin' up that-a-way was most too much."

"Leave that part to me, Bob," smiled Mrs. Young.

When the dishes had been cleared away Drake spread out his samples of scheelite

upon the oilcloth-covered table, building little monuments to indicate the corners of the claims he had staked. His eyes glowed as he talked, Mrs. Young fluttered excitedly from the sick-room to the kitchen, and even Freighter Joe fingered the specimens respectfully. A world gone mad with war had to have steel treated with tungstic acid, and scheelite is one of the main sources of tungstic acid. War demands: it cares nothing for price. There was not enough sheelite, and mills fought for it with gold.

"Rock like this'll bring a thousand dollars a ton, or maybe more, on the siding here in Cottonwood," old Joe said at last, leaning back in his chair, his huge hands lying in his lap like pronged scoops of horn. "You've struck it rich! But you've got to be careful, Bob. Trouble comes when a poor man strikes it rich. It used to be jumpers with guns. Now it's mostly jumpers with some kind o' law papers. But there's always trouble."

"I know," agreed Drake, "but we're goin' to beat the game this trip. This is my claim—" he indicated a space on the table between four of the tiny monuments, "and you can file on this one," he pointed to another—"an' we'll get some of the boys we can trust, an' let 'em take up these others. You'll all make a stake, an' your claims will protect mine."

For a day Cottonwood talked of nothing but Bob Drake, Marjorie, and Martin Channing, and then interest subsided. But Bob and Joe were busy, and the interest of the old sons of the desert who came to squat on their heels in the shade of the cottonwoods never flagged. After three days of Mrs. Young's loving care, Marjorie was so much better that Drake determined upon immediate action.

The last train out that night carried in the mail a location notice to the recorder's office. After Cottonwood was asleep, Freighter Joe drove out into the desert with twelve mules in his team and a trailer hooked behind his wagon. Bob was on the seat beside him, while among blanket-rolls and camp duffle and supplies in the wagon's bottom sprawled "Panamint" Jones, "Whistling Sam," and four others of equally trustworthy caliber.

Morning found them in a land of black hills, a trackless land, but the team plodded on. The round hills ended, and the plain spread out for a league, only to be sucked between towering gray walls. Into the narrow defile the team went, the wagon creaking up the dry ghost of a stream bed. Turning into a narrow gorge branching from the main cañon, the mules scrambled up the steep, dry wash for half a mile. Then the cañon spread out, becoming a queer oval hole a mile wide by three miles long, between multi-hued cliffs several hundred feet high.

"Here we are!" yelled Bob. "This is Cloven Hoof Cañon, an' there's my first monument!"

For the rest of that day men scrambled over the cliffs and about the floor of the cañon, locating the claims Drake had assigned to each one. Next morning the curious echoes called back the ring of hammers on steel drills, and then the cañons rumbled with exploding dynamite. Work had been started upon the Hannibal and Cæsar Mine first, according to sacred promises. The high grade rolled out from streaks and fat pockets. Excited men sorted the ore—the best going into one heap, medium into another, while rock worth only fifty dollars a ton was contemptuously thrown upon the dump. "Skin the high grade, and get a car out quick," had been Bob Drake's order.

IN THE darkness just before the dawn, just a week after he had driven away, Freighter Joe drove into Cottonwood, his team reeking with sweat, his wagon wheels sinking far into the sand under the weight of eight tons of precious rock. Putting the wagons into the barn, he locked the doors. Two nights later he left with different wagons, and news for Limping Bob that Marjorie was still too weak to leave her bed, but was growing stronger. Four days later Joe came back, and Bob was with him.

Realizing that the secret could not be kept longer, Bob ordered a car placed on the siding. While they waited on the railroad a wind howled out of the north, and the tracks of Freighter Joe's wagons disappeared. When the car was ready, men with popping eyes watched while sixteen tons of rock worth a modest fortune was loaded, and sent rolling to Los Angeles. Limping Bob went with it, in the caboose of the freight-train.

Again he was a sensation in Cottonwood,

but this time interest did not die. Freighter Joe's every act was watched by men with burning eyes, but he made no move to leave Cottonwood. Strategy failed to pry even a hint of the location of Bob's mine from his lips. All he would say was that he was anxious to find and hire skinners whom he could trust, for freighting ore.

As if summoned by magic, men came hurrying to Cottonwood, shuffling out of the desert behind leisurely burros, on freight-trains, passenger-trains, and in automobiles loaded with camp-equipment. In the teeming saloons, and in eddying groups in the sandy streets, men argued endlessly as to whether the location Drake had filed by mail covered the mine from which the rock had come, or whether the notice in the recorder's office was a blind. As the veterans of the wastes made no move to start, all waited.

When a car loaded with mine equipment was shunted on to the Cottonwood siding, and Joe transferred the consignment to his wagons, excitement climbed to hysterical heights. The climax came next day, when Limping Bob alighted from the through passenger-train, arrayed in a black Prince Albert suit, black slouch hat, and boiled shirt and collar of wondrous softness. And out of the smoker tumbled a crew of men whose every word and move proclaimed them rock-miners.

Tension was at the breaking point, but Cottonwood had to wait another twelve hours. After visiting Marjorie, who was still weak but on the road to health, Drake got back into overalls, and checked up his outfit. When Bob was alone with Joe, he told him he had personally filed the real locations for himself and the rest, after having them passed by an attorney.

Next morning three long teams creaked southeast from Freighter Joe's corrals. In their wake automobiles snorted, and men hurried feverishly through the dust, whacking burros and cursing in voices strained by excitement. From the high seat of the leading wagon Limping Bob looked back, and his prospector's heart swelled. The rush was on.

For weeks Bob lived in a delirium of excitement. The walls of Cloven Hoof Cañon thundered back the roar of dynamite tearing at living rock. Men swarmed over the cañon's floor. A town leaped into being. The long teams ground a deep trail to the railroad at Cottonwood, and high-grade rock from the Hannibal and Cæsar Mine flowed to the mills, to help pave civilization's road to Berlin.

When Limping Bob at last returned to Cottonwood, his mine fully organized, the demure Marjorie who met him was so transformed that he gasped her mother's name. Their greeting was a little embarrassed, but with it over they went into a small *ramada* to talk. Marjorie tried to make him promise not to leave her again, to take her with him to the camp, to let her make a home for him. But Drake shook his head.

It was far too rough, he argued. She was not meant for the hardships of the desert. But she insisted, until at last he told he what he had learned from her while she talked in delirium on the desert, of her father's many times repeated assertion that he had promised her mother, before her child was born, that the child should be reared amid cultured surroundings, educated, and allowed to live among cultivated people.

Marjorie admitted it all, but begged wistfully for a home, so wistfully that Limping Bob promised that she should have one, one such as her mother would want her to have, just as soon as she had completed the schooling her mother had insisted upon. A week later they were in Los Angeles. While Marjorie forgot her sorrow for a time in orgies of shopping, Drake prospected for a school for her.

"I'm just her father's old minin' partner," he apologized to the cultured principal of the one he had chosen, "and bringin' up an' finishin' off a girl like Marjorie is a little out of my line. But I'm aimin' to give her the sort of surroundin's her mother would want her to have. She ain't too rich, ma'am, but money's the last thing she's got to worry about. I want that sad look to go out of her eyes. Let her take other girls and teachers to shows an' concerts. We've got to sort of erase what—what happened out yonder."

"We will try," promised the principal, extending her hand.

The next few months flew by on wings for Limping Bob, but the time came when the days marched more slowly. Sometimes the boom and clatter of the mine, the shouts of men and clank of tools seemed to beat against the inside of his

skull, and at night he would steal out to the corral where Hannibal and Cæsar lived in state, waxing fatter and lazier.

"This is killin' me!" he would complain querulously. "This— What's that you say, Hannibal? We're rich now, an' don't have to work! Rats! Who wants to be rich? We had to find the mine for Marjorie, o' course, but shucks, I can't get drunk any more! What would Marjorie think o' me if I did? An' folks would think less o' her. ——! I'm a respected citizen. There ain't nothin' to look for. No use prospectin' around. Money buys everythin'. In the city, if I press a blasted button, two-legged lizards come scramblin' so fast I can't think what I want. I can't go prospectin', 'cause this blasted mine takes up all my time. All I can do is make money an' tote responsibility!"

Marjorie's letters were brave, but at first they told Drake plainly enough that she was lonely and sad. But with time a change came, and they were full of the doings of herself and the girl friends she had made, and Limping Bob sighed thankfully when Marjorie began telling of the homes into which she was being welcomed. But when the name of John Holt, the older brother of one of her schoolmates, began appearing regularly, old Bob went prospecting—in the city.

Returning to the mine, he waited until night, and then walked hour after hour into the vacant, starlit desert.

"Ellen!" he called, his voice breaking, as he scrambled up a little hill. "I knew you would be waiting somewhere out here, Ellen," he went on softly, sitting down on a rock. "You know what it is—I've got to talk to you about Marjorie. He's a mighty clean sort of man, Ellen, some kind of a doctor. He knows how to cure crippled children, some of 'em, anyway, an' he could make quite a stake, maybe, but it seems like the poor ones who can't pay sort of come first with him. He knows all about bones. Maybe, if he had been born sooner and livin' in Silver Cañon that time, he might have fixed my leg!

"Yes, he has lots of learnin', an' skill, an' he gives it, mostly, where folks just have to have it, but haven't much but love and thankfulness to give back. I sort of think he's the right mate for Marjorie. You think so too? I'm mighty glad, Ellen—I've worried some. But it ain't fixed yet. He comes from mighty fine folks, and he's sort of proud. He hasn't asked her—he thinks she's rich, an' he's— Oh! we mustn't let that spoil Marjorie's life too!"

At the mine Limping Bob waited in a fever of excitement. But it was a month before Marjorie summoned him to the city.

"But where am I to be married?" she asked, when she had told of her happiness.

"In your own home, of course, you——"

"But I haven't any," she interrupted. "After we are married we can— Oh! Uncle Bob! I'm going to have a home! I've——"

"You are not going to your husband empty-handed," he cut in. "You two young folks pick out the place you want to turn into a home, buy it, and fix it all up ready to live in. Then you can be married there."

MARJORIE and John found a rambling bungalow, sunk to the eaves in a rose garden, and the Hannibal and Cæsar Mine paid for it, and for the new furnishings Marjorie selected. When Marjorie, a radiant bride, ran out the door on her husband's arm, to begin her new life with a happy tour, the guests followed in merry groups. When at last the house was still, a withered old man limped through the deserted rooms, and stood for long before the altar of roses, an exalted light upon his wrinkled face.

But the days which followed were endless for him. At the mine old Bob hobbled from place to place, and always his eyes turned toward the vacant desert. Two months after the wedding he joined Marjorie and John in their bungalow home, and their happiness was reflected in his heart for almost a month—then he went back to the mine.

His riches were chains. His responsibilities became galling burdens. Something was calling—calling him to the desert—to the vast solitudes. Months seemed eternities—and Bob spent more and more time with his burros, while the bank deposits of the Hannibal and Cæsar Mine mounted until it seemed to him the gold would crush him.

A year went by—and the vein pinched out. The ledge which had been ten feet wide on the surface came to an end. When he had verified the superintendent's report, a savage joy filled his heart. He would soon be free! While he was giving direc-

tions in the mine office for cleaning up the rest of the ore in sight, before closing down, a teamster, just arrived from the railroad, came in with a telegram for him. Shoving it into his pocket, Bob forgot it entirely, and a week later started for Los Angeles.

He found a trim nurse in command of the bungalow, but she seemed to be expecting him, and said Mrs. Holt would see him. Wondering vaguely, old Bob waited. When at last the nurse led him to Marjorie's room, he found her tucked among the pillows of a chaise-longue. Her face was pale, and there were dark circles under her eyes, but he had never seen eyes shine so before.

"Look, Uncle Bob!" she exclaimed, and in the hollow of her arm he saw a tiny head. "This is Robert Martin Holt!"

What he did, or what he said, old Bob never knew. Soon the nurse was shooing him out. That night in the living-room he told John that the mine had pinched out, and that he wanted to settle things up, and to give Marjorie her share of the undivided profits. John rose and began striding up and down, deeply agitated, while Bob Drake watched him in wonder.

"Uncle Bob," John asked, so deeply moved that his voice was husky, "why did you do all this for Marjorie—for us?"

"Her father an' me——"

"Were enemies!" John finished the sentence, interrupting. "I accidentally learned the truth the other day, or part of the truth. This mine, which is supposed to be half Marjorie's, was located after her father's death! Martin Channing was your enemy. He shot you. He died in debt. You paid his debts. You supported Marjorie—gave her this home!"

"Don't talk so loud," pleaded Limping Bob, his face white, his old eyes both pleading and defiant. "Marjorie never knew her mother. You know how she respects her father—he's all she's got to sort of hang her memory on. I didn't want any stain on his name, for her sake. The truth will break her heart!"

"She'll never hear it if I can help it," John affirmed grimly. "But tell me, Uncle Bob," he urged, "why did you do all this?"

"I loved her mother—love her yet!" choked Limping Bob. "Martin Channing an' I both wanted Ellen Ellsworth. Martin was rich. His father owned most of the Screamin' Eagle Mine in Silver Cañon. I was poor, too poor to marry—but Ellen—Ellen promised to wait for me. I went into the desert to find my stake—our stake. I was young, and too proud to go back to Ellen empty-handed. I—she waited two years. They persuaded her I was dead. She married Martin at last.

"I made a big strike—but I got back to Silver Cañon too late. Martin was drunk the day I got there. When I met him he bragged. I didn't have a gun on—but—but we had some trouble—an' he shot me. Shot me twice. I've dragged this leg ever since! The other bullet burned me here, over the ear. When I woke up I'd forgot where I'd found that quartz hill.

"The boys told me Ellen came to see me while I was sick, but I didn't recognize her. I never saw her alive again. Martin took her to San Francisco. The boys made him leave Silver Cañon—he'd shot an unarmed man. When Ellen died her spirit came to me in the desert. Folks don't understand; they say I'm locoed. But I did it for Ellen. You must let Ellen and me have our way. Marjorie must have her share of the mine profits!"

"On one condition, Uncle Bob," John answered, his eyes bright, while he gripped the old man's thin shoulder with a strong hand, "and that is this: our home must be your home! Just as if you were Marjorie's father. We have planned it that way, and both wanted it that way, from the beginning."

In the weeks which followed Drake tried hard to be happy. For a few days he was busy with his bankers, and then he had nothing to do but to enjoy himself—and soon the days were endless. He cursed himself for being an ingrate, but it did no good. John and Marjorie took him into their lives as they already had taken him into their hearts.

But their lives and his had run too long in different channels. He was a third, an outsider despite their loyalty. They were young, and he was old. Surrounded by love, he was lonely. Again he spent a few days consulting with his banker and his attorney—then announced that business called him to the desert.

A week later Marjorie was singing while she held a precious bundle close to her breast, when John came home some hours before his regular time. She looked up inquiringly as he entered her room, startled by something she saw in his face.

"I've bad news, Marjorie," he began huskily. "Uncle Bob—is dead!"

He turned away from the quick tears in her eyes, to gaze out of the window, his hands plunged deep into his pockets.

"How—when?" cried Marjorie, trying to control her tears.

"It was his heart," John told her. "He must have been expecting the end, though he said nothing to us, for it seems he had his grave picked out, on a hill near Cottonwood, from which he felt he could always look over the desert. His old friend, Freighter Joe, buried him there.

"Judge Henderson, Uncle Bob's lawyer, called me up and told me, then asked me to come to his office. There he showed me Uncle Bob's will," John went on chokingly. "He provided that no monument, other than a simple one of piled stones, should mark his grave, and that his remains must not be moved. The judge wrote the first part of the will, but Uncle Bob wrote in his bequests in longhand, himself. He left me five thousand dollars as a token of affection, with instructions that I buy a 'gasoline burro'—he always called automobiles that, you know—'and use the change to buy feed for the critter.' Then he left you ten thousand, 'to buy something useless that will make you happy.' And he left ten thousand in trust for Robert Martin Holt. Then—" John stopped to clear his throat—"then he left two hundred thousand dollars in bonds to—to me—with the request that I use the income 'to help make crippled children laugh and run!' "

"Poor, dear, old Uncle Bob," sobbed Marjorie. "If right is right, you are in heaven now!"

BUT when the shadows were deepening a young father and a young mother were bending over a tiny crib, forgetful of all else in the world save the wonder and joy of the baby life it held, while up a ridge of crumbly sand two fat burros waddled under heavy packs, followed by a bent old man with a dragging leg.

"Shake a leg now, you varmints!" commanded Limping Bob, whacking away with his cudgel. "Don't you know we're dead! We've got to get over this summit, or folks'll think they're seein' ghosts! There's nothin' like havin' the right kind o' friends," he cackled. "When Freighter Joe got hissef' elected coroner of Yucca County, I didn't think much about it, but Joe came in mighty handy. He and Anna saw how it was right away. We buried that empty box, an' he filled out a death-certificate, an' we were free again!

"What's that you say, Hannibal? We were pretty well-fixed. O' course we were, so far as money went. But we were chained to money. Joe, an' Panamint, an' the other boys, they had some sense, they didn't make too much! But us—there wasn't anythin' for us to look for. Marjorie and John were mighty good to me, but I was in the way. They wouldn't even think it. I'll bet my shirt on that, but I was. And the money will help make them happy—it'll help John make little cripples romp an' laugh an' run. They've got each other, an' love, an' youth, an' little Bob! All we had was money."

The little caravan topped the first rise pantingly and zigzagged down the other side. In the wide saddle between the hills Limping Bob stopped and looked about him with deep satisfaction.

"Ellen! Ellen! You knew I was coming! You came to meet me!" he called, running forward, his hands outstretched. "I didn't expect to see you until we had made the summit," he went on softly, while an invisible clasp seemed to welcome his worn old hands, and he stood looking down, as if peering into the lifted eyes of a woman.

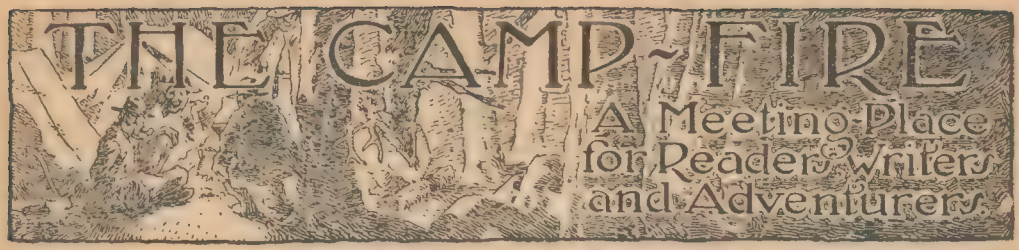
"I've come back to stay—to stay with you," he said tenderly. "I couldn't stand it any longer. I don't blame you for keepin' away from the city, an' the jangle of the mine, but I was mighty lonesome. That was a chore, fixin' up those young folks, but it's done, an' they're mighty happy, Ellen. And now I'm free—free to be with you.

He stopped to laugh, his voice echoing in shrill, almost boyish merriment.

"I died, an' I've gone to heaven, Ellen, the only heaven Limpin' Bob'll ever get to! What's that? You had to run to meet me—you just came down to s'prize me—you have to run back now—you'll be waitin' just over the summit. All right, we'll be there!"

He stood with bared head under the stars, watching. In a few moments he returned to his burros.

"Wake up now, you Hannibal!" he called gaily. "We've got to top this summit before somebody sees a ghost!"



KIT CARSON—Carson of Taos, that name alone is sufficient to ensure interest in Hugh Pendexter's novel in this issue. It's been a good while since most of us have read anything about this hero of our boyhood and it is good to see him again with man's eyes—and perhaps surprising to realize that he wasn't just an Indian killer but among the chief of those who hewed our nation out of the wild.

Norway, Maine.

The date of the story is 1838, middle of the period when Carson was hunter for Bent's Fort. He was trapper for eight years, hunter at Bent's for eight years, and then guide for Frémont, engaged in Mexican War, Indian agent, Indian fighter, with spasmodic attempts at farming.

Norway, Maine.

ACCORDING to the calendar history of the Kiowa, as given by James Mooney, in 14th Annual Rept. B. A. E. the first Winter count, 1832-33, is designated, "Winter they captured the money," and refers to Lame-old-man's coup in capturing a large quantity of silver coins from a small band of Missourians after a fight close to the South Canadian, near the present town of Lathrop, in the Panhandle. The Kiowas lost Black Wolf and killed several Americans. Ignorant of money, they wore it in their hair and called it *adalhangya*, "hair-metal." The white men had ten thousand dollars in specie packed on mules. Swung off the main trail and followed the Canadian to escape the Indians.

IN 1856 a border desperado (according to Abbott's "Life of Carson," also given in D. C. Peter's "Pioneer Days and Frontier Adventure") by the name of Fox plotted to murder Messrs. Brevoort and Weatherhead, who were bound for the States with a large sum of money to be used in purchasing goods. Fox organized the escort which was to "protect" the traders. Before starting from Santa Fé he visited Taos, Carson's home, to recruit a certain desperado. The man refused to go, but said nothing until the party was well under way, then blabbed. Carson decided the killing would occur on the Cimarron, between two and three hundred miles east of Taos. Inside an hour, accompanied by a small band of employees, he took the trail. Overtook the party, drove thirty-five desperadoes from camp and brought Fox back to Taos, where he was kept in prison for some time.

These two widely separated facts suggested "Carson of Taos."

THE item in the *Missouri Intelligencer* is not mentioned in Abbott's and others' writings about Carson. They state he had a chance to join a wagon train and travel to Santa Fé. As a matter of fact he was "bound out" to the saddler at the time, and, seeing an opportunity, he simply "shoved." According to a brief article on Carson in Vol. 80 *Century Magazine* (author's name I can not, unfortunately, recall), Carson's remark about making Indians run after him, etc., was made by him when an army officer of high rank met him at Maxwell's ranch on the Cimarron and said, "What, the great Kit Carson, who has made so many, etc."

THE Red Jaguar is drawn after a description of the infamous bandit, Espinosa, as given by Colonel Henry Inman in his "Old Santa Fé Trail." Espinosa killed his sister's American sweetheart and fled to the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. He was killed by Tom Tobin, a noted trapper, in 1864. Tobin trailed him single-handed and shot him down and brought his head in a gunny-sack to old Fort Massachusetts, later Fort Garland. Colonel Inman did not believe Tobin ever received the reward offered for the bandit's head. Espinosa's career lasted for nearly ten years.

WILLIAM WILLIAMS is described in all works I have examined dealing with the old frontier days. He was a Methodist minister in Missouri before taking to the plains. He lived with many tribes, knew many dialects, was better acquainted with the Rocky Mountains than any man in the West. Colonel Inman says his knowledge of the Rockies was never surpassed until Jim Bridger reached the height of his career. Williams' name is alive today on mountain pass and streams. He believed he was to turn into a buck-elk at death and begged his friend not to shoot the animal he was at pains to describe. Frémont nearly lost his life when Williams acted as his guide, some claiming the old man was in his dotage. Colonel Inman says, however, that old mountain men contended that had Frémont followed Williams' advice he would not have lost three men and his papers and instruments in trying to cross the mountains from the source of the Arkansas in dead Winter. According to the old-timers he warned Frémont it could scarcely be done, but was ignored, and a novice allowed to guide the party.

THE Osage stole the Kiowa *taime* in the Summer of 1833. No sun-dance was held that Summer because of this loss. The medicine was subsequently ransomed by Dohasan, greatest of the Kiowa chiefs. The Osage did not scalp those killed when they got the *taime*, but after their fashion beheaded them and left the heads in the

brass buckets the Kiowas had procured in trade from the Pawnees.

In the Summer of 1868 the Utes captured the "man" and "bear" *taime*. Setdaya-ite (Many-Bears), nephew of Ansote, carried them on a war-path. Hornless-Bull, his friend, went with him, each carrying an image. A skunk, a taboo, crossed their path at the start. Their Comanche scouts had little mirrors, another taboo, and afterward killed and ate a bear. Many warriors turned back, knowing their medicine was spoiled. Only thirty Utes, yet they won. Both Many-Bears and the Bull were killed.

The Utes experienced misfortunes after this victory and grew afraid of the medicine. The two images were given to Maxwell, on the Cimarron, and stood on his shop shelf for a long time. Then they disappeared and the Kiowas never got them back.

HEART-EATER was wounded in the leg in a Winter attack (1838-39) against the Arapaho. *Young Mexico* is patterned after Charlie Bent, the educated half-breed who "went wrong."

The incident of a warrior rescuing a boy by carrying him in his teeth, in Chapter Four, was inspired by the feat being performed by a Kiowa warrior when the Osage massacred the village in 1833, when stealing the *taime*.

Heart-Eater's boast about the legging fringe of finger-bones is the reflection of the fact that a noted Apache war-chief, called Chico Velasques by the Mexicans, boasted such ornaments, one leg being trimmed with bones of Mexican victims, the other by American victims.

Once Carson was in council with some Indians and smoked with them. Then the chief said in Spanish that he was to be killed "the next time he takes the pipe." Carson thoroughly understood Spanish, learning it when a youth from old Kin Cade, famous mountain man, and was on his guard.

"O sun, you remain forever, etc.," the death-song of the Kaitsenko, was sung by Setangya (Sitting Bear), famous Kiowa chief and medicine man, when he was killed in trying to escape after being arrested for attacking a wagon train in Texas.

Ansote, "Long Foot," was fifth keeper of the *taime*, holding office for forty years, or until his death in 1870.

YAPAHE, "Warriors," resembled other military organizations of various Plains tribes, known to whites often as Dog-soldiers, but more elaborate than those found in other tribes. There were six grades, or societies, going to make up the Yapahe. The first was the *Polanyup*, "Rabbits," composed of boys from eight to ten years old. Their dance imitated the skipping and jumping of a rabbit. This left five grades for military service. Each grade had its own songs and dances. Grades two, three, four, five, varied little in rank, but the Kaitsenko (also given as K'oitsenko), grade six, limited to ten picked men, was the highest military position a warrior could attain. Owing to his vow never to retreat unless his warriors pulled up the arrow that anchored him to his position, a member of this grade was pledged to death on every warpath where the arrow was carried. The arrow was carried only when it was intended to fight to a finish. The leader chosen to carry the arrow was only an ordinary warrior when going out to fight without it. It was permissible to loan the arrow to a brave eager to prove his courage. In that case the owner stayed at home. But if a decisive battle was to be fought the owner of the arrow was disgraced and branded as a coward if he failed to carry the arrow.

LITTLE can be said of Carson that is not already known to the reader. In an old geography my father studied when a boy everything from the western border of Missouri to the Rockies is marked, "Great American Desert." Zebulon Pike did not cause the myth to vanish, nor does Irving's account of the Astors dispel the false belief, if I remember his chronicles correctly. Carson traveled this "desert" and found it filled with game and Indians, with teeming rivers and rich lands.

Carson, it is claimed by border historians, possessed the confidence of the western Indians to a greater extent than any other man, with the possible exception of General William Clark. He was one of the first to urge that the red man be taught to cultivate the soil and live on farms. Our Indian policy, wherever it has improved and progressed, has followed his suggestions in a general way. He lived in the time of giants, and was distinguished even above such men as the Bents, St. Vrain, Jim Bridger, Ewing Young, Fitzpatrick, Williams, Maxwell, and a host of other Empire-builders.

THE Kiowas differentiated between Texans and Americans, as they believed the former to be of a different nationality. Their name for Texans, *Tehaneko*, was derived from the Spanish *Tejano*. They incessantly made war on the Texans, even when professing friendship to Americans. The Civil War cemented this old belief, for the Texans were fighting against the North, i. e. Americans.—PENDEXTER.

THIS letter from a comrade who gives neither name or address but opens up a few large, fat questions. So far as American newspapers are concerned the Mexican border has been removed from the map for nearly two years. The lid will be off before this sees print, but go to it easy.

Can't some fellow around the Camp-Fire throw some light on this subject? I've been through lots of the West—Utah, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, Montana, Wyoming, Northern Arizona, but I've never been along the Border. Not long ago a guy came along and told me the Border was still tough in some parts. Rustlers, killers and the like. The toughest things I ever found were a bunch of greasers trying to kick up a revolution or some such thing. A bunch of cavalry hove in sight. Greasers vamoosed *muy pronto*. What was he? Loco or a —— liar?—A COMRADE.

A WORD from William M. McCoy concerning his story in this issue:

Los Angeles, Cal.

The idea for "Limpin' Bob" grew out of what I learned while associating with a number of old prospectors in the Shadow Mountains. *Limpin' Bob* is not drawn from one man, but is a sort of combination. I like to build my characters that way, taking suggestions from this man's life and

that man's experience, etc. But he comes nearer being old Joe, whose picture I am also enclosing, than he does any other one man.

I took this snapshot of Joe one Sunday; you will note that he is all dressed up. I worked with him in developing the Desert Dolly Mine, and no matter how long the day, or how tired we were, he shaved every evening and cleaned up. On Sunday he became the dude of the camp, in clean overalls, shirt, and a sacred black hat. Old Joe is "queer" about a lot of things—but anything on earth would be safe in his keeping, if dog-faithfulness and plain, unvarnished honor could make it safe. There is a good deal of his story in "Limpin' Bob."

The other snapshot is of myself, taken last December, beside the monument on the Desert Dolly claim. The altitude there is nearly five thousand feet, and in Winter it is cold—in Summer it isn't, and in Summer there is no water—and all the year there is cactus and yucca as far as two men can see. Several of us thought we had the world by the tail when we discovered the Desert Dolly, but if we had, the tail broke off in our hands.—WILLIAM M. MCCOY.

FOLLOWING Camp-Fire custom, Mrs. Grace P. T. Knudson stands up and introduces herself on the occasion of her first story in our magazine. You will note that she has had her full share of adventures.

Castine, Maine.

Though born in the small town of Castine, Maine, now my Summer home, I am familiar with many of the larger cities and towns, and some hamlets, of the world. In the course of natural human events I have three times circled the globe; have claimed residence in the Philippines fourteen years; made five trips to Japan; browsed in Hawaii, Borneo and Ceylon; been seasick in all oceans but the Arctic and Antarctic—and in this connection have a special intimacy with the China Sea, having been obliged to cross it numberless times. Also, I have been homesick on every continent but Australia and South America. Whether this is all because I was "born with two crowns" or of a race of seamen I have never satisfactorily determined.

IN THE aforesaid course of events I have taught school, done newspaper and publicity work and been a business woman. Much of my wandering was in the last connection and along the line of searching for and buying oddities and art goods for sale in this country.

My most extended adventure was ninety days from Manila to New York on the old British tramp *Melbourne*, in company with one other young woman. The casualties were a fire in the hemp with which the vessel was loaded, and a set of disabled boilers while in the Indian Ocean.

My most interesting business experience was a partnership with a white Chinaman—name forgotten—in Cagayan de Misimas, Mindanao. We underbid a native Filipino who was starving the provincial prisoners on a contract to feed them. There were some two hundred in the jail at the time. We fed them up a year. Then the old native recaptured the contract by underbidding us, one-fourth a *centavo* per head, and our partnership was dissolved.

PERHAPS the most thrilling moments—to me—of any one adventure were when I stood alone in a ravine on the top of Mount Apo, the highest peak of the Philippines, struggling with the conviction that the other two white members of our party had been murdered. Four thousand feet above the limit of habitation, I felt myself to be at the mercy of sixteen pagans who had mutinied in camp the night before. After twenty minutes of waiting, unable to stand the strain of further suspense, I went forward to meet whatever fate was to befall. A long, long hike of another twenty minutes, and I came upon my people hunting for me. They had merely lost the trail.—GRACE P. T. KNUDSON.

FROM one of the many of us who, after being real adventurers, have now joined the fireside contingent:

New Hamburg, Ontario.

I have at last decided to do what I have felt like doing for a long time, and that is to put in my word at the Camp-Fire. I've been a listener for a good many years.

You can see by my letter-head that I am no longer in the adventure class. I am married and settled down, and all the adventure I get now is out of your magazine.

But I've had my share of the real thing, although nothing to be compared to some. My partner and I were among the first to hit Cobalt and came near hitting higher at the time of the explosion. Since then I've traveled over most of Canada and the States. Beat my way over most of British Columbia, Montana and Washington on the bumpers, worked in lumber-camps for seven Winters, rode the ranch and even herded sheep, but not long enough to go crazy.

But now I'm a quite inoffensive business man with a wife and kid and take myself back to old times with *Adventure* and Camp-Fire.—RALPH R. GRIBBLE.

SOME five or six years ago, when our Camp-Fire was just starting, I asked some of the men who were giving us our stories in those days to tell us rather fully about their own adventures. Some of these got published; one or two, because of those famous "exigencies of space," never saw print. Here is Talbot Mundy's; with his present series of stories now running in our magazine, it has an added interest.

Since it was written he has, as you know, become an American citizen and a very good one, spending most of his time in Maine but now in New York again, and adding no chapters to the record of his outland adventures.

It happens very seldom in a man's life that he gets the opportunity to talk about himself to the people who are going to read his stories; and it happens still less frequently that he can do it without his victim's being able to talk back. So I'm going to make the most of this. Sit still, and suffer!

Why shouldn't a man talk about himself? I know when I read a story I always wonder whether the writer of it has lived through the fear and the joy and the various mixed emotions that he portrays, or whether he is only guessing. If I know that he has seen it all, or something very like it, I enjoy the story; otherwise I don't. And I dare say I am not at all unusual in that respect.

STANDING at my own grave-side, and looking down into the grave that had been dug for me, was what actually started me at the writing game. Though I did not actually begin just at that time, it put the notion into my head that some of my experiences might make valuable copy. I made the usual beginner's mistake at first of writing the bald narrative of what had happened, instead of inventing new episodes and fitting men I had met into them.

Naturally nobody wanted to read the unvarnished experiences of a rolling stone, strung into paragraphs but quite devoid of plot; in fact the only excuse for talking about them now is to prove that I know more or less what I write about, for a man who has knocked about the world for fifteen years or so without getting rich has very little to boast of.

But I was born with a thirst for adventure, or at all events I developed it at a very early age; and along with it came an insatiable passion for finding out how people would act under given circumstances. For instance, one of the earliest things I can remember is sticking a pin into a man to find out what he would do; and what he did to me was a very small matter when compared to the satisfaction of finding out something for myself.

My people destined me for the church or the law, I forget which, but I know they gave me the choice of two evils and that I chose a third that they never even dreamed of. They cut off supplies to enforce obedience, and I went without supplies—to Germany. The method of choosing my destination was my own idea, though I have no doubt that many people have used it before and since; but it is so delightfully simple and devoid of detail, and I have used it with desirable results so frequently, that it is worth mentioning.

THE plan is to first count all your money and then, by consulting railway time-tables and shipping lists, to find out just how far it will take you in any direction. Then put just so much of a map of the world on the table as your money will cover, shut your eyes and make a jab at the map with something sharp. Make a note of the town or village nearest to where the pricker lands, and go there without further argument. My pricker landed on a place called Quedlinburg in the Harz Mountains, and I arrived there a couple of days later with an English five-shilling piece in my pocket, a fox-terrier dog on a leash, and a portmanteauful of clothes somewhere on the line behind me. I have often wondered who got the portmanteau.

There was a sort of mechanic person in Quedlinburg just then; his job was driving a traction engine that towed some vans belonging to a circus. He talked tolerable English, and, as I couldn't talk German, I was glad to make friends with him. He had only two ambitions. One was to keep his job, and the other was to get drunk—very drunk, and very often. I helped him to satisfy one of them the first night with my five shillings. The next morning he gave me a job. In future I was to drive the engine and he was to drink the beer; I was to get ten marks a week from the proprietor and eight more from him, but on the other hand I was to do all the work, take all the blame if anything went wrong, and sleep under the engine in all weathers, so as to be "Johnny on the spot," so to speak.

It turned out to be a good job, and I liked it, and I found out all there was to know about that traction engine in a very short time. We had a steam roundabout and swings and boxing-booths, and some wild animals in cages along with the circus; in fact, it was almost a traveling fair. My job at night was to drive the dynamo that was fixed on to the front of the engine, and I used to sit up on the driver's seat and watch the crowd and absolutely revel in the noise and glamor and confusion.

BUT one day my mechanic friend got more than usually drunk and killed my dog; and he got the worst of the battle royal that followed. Of course that ended our gentleman's agreement and I had to quit; and I tried my luck from end to end of Germany after that, working at any sort of job I could get, and usually hungry.

I got a good job at last—back close to Quedlinburg where I started. But it seems that in this extraordinary world a good job always has a handle to it; you've got to give your whole time and thought and energy to your boss. I was hired distinctly on those terms, and I made good, but I didn't like it. A man back in England happened to hear that I had made good and hired me at a salary that was absolutely enormous for a boy of seventeen, but on absolutely the same stipulation.

My new employer had a peculiarity that is not at all uncommon among men of his type in England; he loved buying expensive hunters, but he had not always the nerve to ride them; so quite a large part of my duties consisted in riding his hunters for him three days a week or so during the season. Besides being splendid sport and keeping me in excellent condition, the experience gave me a knowledge of horsemanship and wood-craft that has been invaluable since. I piled up money, though, because I hadn't a chance to spend it. As a matter of fact I piled up too much money, and that, and the fact that I was barely twenty-one and that my job had grown monotonous, got me going with the map of the world and the sticker again.

This time, though, I could afford steamboat fares, so I hadn't got to cut the map. I had the whole wide world to choose from at random, and the compass point came down bang in the middle of India. I asked my employer whether he hadn't any kind of pull that would secure me a job in that country, and, as good luck would have it, he had; he secured me a sort of hybrid Government job in a Native State, and I started off for India feeling something as Alexander must have done.

The first thing I saw in India was a bullock-cart loaded up with corpses—legs and arms sticking out from every side of it, and a fetid mixture of flies and aroma floating up above. That looked good to me; I thought that maybe I might really get interested before long, and I left Bombay with a heart full of hope and a boxful of Kipling's books in the railway carriage with me. Plague, of course, was the cause of the corpses in the bullock-cart; they were on their way to be disposed of at the burning-ghat; and, though I hadn't bargained for it, I had to spend the next fifteen months fighting plague and cholera and

famine in turn—single-handed a good part of the time—in a temperature in the shade of anything from one hundred and twelve upward.

The only compensation that made the job in any way worth while was the pig-sticking; that, and fox-hunting, are the two finest land sports in the world, and I got nearly all I wanted of it, though I could not always get away. There was a sort of permanent tent club not far away; it was the one common meeting ground for the white men scattered through the district, and when the morning's sport was over and we were lounging under the double flies I had the privilege of talking to some of the most interesting men I have ever met—men who were giving up their lives out of absolutely unselfish devotion to their country.

I FOUND out no end of things of course, and it was very interesting, but I can't say that I enjoyed it. No doubt the impression that the experience made on me has come in very useful since, but I don't like to think about the details for very long at a time; the sight of all those thousands of people, good decent people, too, for the most part, rotting to death from various causes and suffering unspeakably would be likely to have a sobering effect on any one. The worst part of it was being able to do so little for them.

I went down pretty badly from malaria and overwork, and a sort of temperamental nausea, so when the plague had retired under cover and the famine had lessened sufficiently to give the Government time to breathe, I asked to be relieved, and another man was sent to take my job. I could have had another job straight away had I wanted it; but I had a sort of notion that I had been deep down into hell, and I had no desire just then to take the trip again. The prospect of a trip to Europe with a pocketful of money was much more alluring, and off to Europe I went to luxuriate and loaf and breathe clean cool air for six months.

But six months of Europe are enough for anybody at one time, and I soon got hungry for India again, for, after all, I had seen only a little corner of it, and that from only one point of view. This time I was lucky enough to arrange with a big firm of publishers to act as their occasional correspondent, and I walked on board the P. & O. steamer at Tilbury docks with the idea firmly planted in my head that I was going to set the Thames on fire at last. I didn't do it, of course; but I had a durned hard try.

A little native war broke out almost directly after I landed, and on the strength of the credentials I had with me I hadn't very much difficulty getting to the front as a sort of junior war correspondent. My word! When I walked out of the Government office at last with the signed permit in my pocket I wouldn't have traded jobs with anybody in all the wide world! I could see fame in the offing already, and fortune coupled to it. Even now I would rather make a reputation as a war correspondent than in any other way, so you can imagine what I felt like then with what looked like the chance in front of me. I remember I felt awfully sorry for all the unfortunate writer-men who hadn't got my opportunity.

But I started in to make a whole lot too much of the opportunity. The thing wasn't so good as I thought it was anyhow, and besides that I was much too keen. The General commanding the British forces was enjoying his first experience of the war game too; he hadn't felt his feet yet, and he didn't believe in war correspondents on any terms; but he particularly didn't want anybody there to criticize him during the early stages of the campaign. Of course his objection was perfectly natural under the circumstances, but it didn't suit me; he issued an order forbidding any one to leave the lines after dark, or at any time without permission; and as he never once gave his permission I disobeyed the order. Or, at least, he said I disobeyed the order.

WHAT actually happened was this. I kept pestering him for permission to visit the advanced posts, and he kept on refusing; and each time he refused he did it more violently and with less command of his temper. At last one afternoon I was particularly insistent, and he turned round and told me to "go to ——!" Well, I took that for verbal permission to go just where I pleased; a fellow can't go to —— until he knows where it is, and I set out to find it.

I didn't get back to camp until two hours after dawn the following morning because a Ghoorka picket happened to hear me, and they amused themselves by firing volleys at me at intervals from midnight onward, and I had to wait until the mist lifted and they could see who I was. I hid behind a rock, but they made awfully good shooting in the dark, and chipped pieces off the rock all round me. Even when you know you can't be hit, the experience of being fired at is not pleasant, and it is still less so when you are wet through and shivering with cold.

So I lay there and tried to console myself with the knowledge that I had secured some quite important information. It was important, too, because the General pumped me dry and made use of it. But he didn't say thank you. He censored my despatches out of existence, and ordered me back to the base for disobedience to orders. And back to the base I had to go, having seen both the beginning and the end of my career as war correspondent within a month.

I went tiger-shooting after that; and then on a trip up to Afghanistan, though I hadn't gone very far over the Himalayas before the Government turned me back. I had come to the conclusion by that time that the Government of India was a pretty difficult outfit to fool, so I had a look at China and Singapore and the Straits Settlements and gave them time to forget me. I thought that wouldn't take long. Then I took a trip up the Persian Gulf on a tramp steamer with a black skipper; we broke down half-way up the Gulf, and then I really did know what —— was like. On that trip I saw oxen being fed on dried fish. It sounds improbable, but I saw it with my two eyes.

I cooked up a gorgeous scheme then for a trip with another man up through India to Siberia, but the South-African war broke out and that put quite another complexion on things. Of course I hadn't seen anything like the whole of India; a man couldn't do that in a life-time. But I had seen and got to know Tommy Atkins at his best, and the men who lead Tommy Atkins "when the guns wheel into line," and my head was already cramfull of facts and fragments of facts that have since formed the foundation for such stories as "The Phantom Battery." If I have the ill-luck to live a hundred years, and keep on writing all the time, I may be able to exhaust half the stories that I know I can write about India; and though I have dived down deep into it, and seen it from several points of view, I know no more of it than a crab knows of the ocean. India is some country.

I WASN'T tired of it yet by any means; in fact I have always meant to go back there again some day; but for the present there was a real live war to go to, and there were quite a lot of men in India besides myself who imagined that war was the one big picnic that should on no account be missed; so we made quite a strong regiment. We spent our own money on accouterments, and landed in Africa with only one regret among the lot of us—that it wasn't going to be a real war. It seemed to us an awful pity that such a fine regiment as we were should be wasted on a coconut-shy campaign against an enemy that hadn't any cavalry. We were cavalry—to begin with.

Barring a few prisoners, and mighty few of those, I never saw a live Boer the whole time. The picnic consisted for the most part of lying in the rain and being fired at, or lying in the scorching sun and being fired at. The rations were usually dead trek-ox or dead horse, dry biscuit, nice green water to wash it down with, and as a general rule no salt. There was no smoke to speak of, but every now and then you could see a flash somewhere on the hillside in front of you, and sometimes the man next to you would give a short sudden sob and lie very still. Or then again, sometimes he would sit up and scream, and go rolling over and over in agony. When the ground wasn't wet it was swarming with vermin, and most of the men who weren't shot went sick either from the vermin or the flies or the bad water or else exposure. I had the good luck to get hurt with a piece of shell before the relief of Ladysmith, and that meant Cape Town for me, and nothing more to do.

The people in Cape Town who weren't talking treason were all full of schemes for getting suddenly rich. I thought out a scheme too. So two months later I left Cape Town, broke to the world and very glad indeed to get a job before the mast on a big steel sailing ship. I did the same thing again not long afterward, but not from choice, and I have since left off wondering why men can be found who are fools enough to go to sea at all—I mean on merchant ships. We were short-handed, fed on offal that would not be good for pigs, ill-treated, struck, sworn at, overworked all the time, housed in a fo'castle that was swarming with rats and vermin, deprived of any kind of privacy, and, in fact, treated like animals. Only animals are never worked so hard.

BY THE time that we reached Australia another Englishman and myself had had enough of it, so we ran away from the ship, leaving our kit and our wages behind us. We neither of us had any qualifications that were likely to get us a job up country, but we hadn't any money either, so we couldn't stay in Sydney; we had either to walk or go to sea again. We walked.

The two of us tramped all the way to Brisbane together, asking for work at every place we came to, and never getting it. We got food, though, because in Australia they have to feed all "sun-downers," as hoboes are called; if they didn't, nobody would ever go on the road to look for work. Now and then we cked out a little money by singing songs in wayside pubs, but we arrived in Brisbane just as broke as when we set out.

There seemed nothing else for it but the sea again, and we finally reached Hobart, Tasmania, in the stokehold of a small steamer. The work was hard, but the grub was good, and the pay (ten pounds a month) was quite excellent. Hobart is a lovely little place, but I couldn't see any chance of getting rich there. Charlie (the other fellow) elected to stop, though, and I pulled out alone, before the mast again, on a three-masted barque loaded up with blue-gum piles for the new pier at Delagoa Bay.

There is no need to describe that ship; it is sufficient to say that she was worse than the first one. We were very nearly wrecked on the way across, and the crew went sick from being fed on salt fish; every man Jack deserted, including myself, at Lorenço Marques.

Lorenço Marques is a pretty easy place to go broke in; and when you are broke it must be nearly the hardest place in the world in which to get on your feet again. Before I succeeded in getting a job I got so low with fever, and so absolutely busted, that I was glad to accept the hospitality of a Chinese laundryman; he put me to bed between clean sheets, and fed me back to health again. Then he told me where to go and get a job! I landed the job at the first try, and it was a good one, too, if you reckon without the climate.

I had to run a big estate up the Limpopo River, and while doing it I am glad to say that I was able to help my friend the Chinaman. It seems that he was getting too prosperous, and the local officials came down on him for an extra big rake-off. He refused, so they trumped up two or three charges against him and put him out of business, fining him every cent of money he had and turning him out on the street penniless. Then he remembered me, and one day he arrived at my hut on the bank of the Limpopo, much more dead than alive. It was turn about then; I gave him a bed and fed him back to health, and then lent him money, and in about three months time he was in a fair way to becoming a prosperous trader, buying corn from the natives and shipping it to the coast.

THEN I went down with fever so badly that I had either to chuck my job or die, and, not being at all anxious to die, I did the other thing. The British East African Government had just finished the railway to the Lake, and the country was being boomed like wild-fire, so I decieded to go there and took the very first steamer with the idea of getting well again on the way up. Of course everybody knows now that British East Africa is a very much overrated country; there is neither mineral there nor anything else of much value except wild game; but I was one of the comparatively early birds who helped to find it out.

There were no jobs to be had, but there was some money to be made shooting elephants, although one had to ignore the Government regulations in order to do it. Off the beaten track, though, it was not very difficult at that time to keep out of the Government's reach; the job was to slip through into the open and, once outside the pale, to stay there until you had cleaned up what you were after. So I hired a native named Kazi Moto, who had just come out of jail, as my personal servant and took the train up country. Kazi Moto means "Work like ——," and he certainly did fill the bill. With his help I got a *safari* together and slipped through into the elephant country, where I joined a Greek of most blazing amazing courage but very doubtful reputation.

The hunting that followed was the hardest and most dangerous work I ever tackled; for excitement

it beat war all to smithereens, and among other things it gave me an insight into the meaning of the word fear. I will take off my hat at any time to a man who can truthfully say that he is not afraid of a charging elephant.

I didn't get rich at the game, but I made enough money to pay my men and I got hold of a good big mob of cattle, which I drove down over the border into German territory. A marauding band of Masai tackled me not far from Shirati and drove off the whole lot. Naturally I resented it and, in the process of doing so, I received a spear-wound in my right leg. Kazi Moto killed my assailant with the butt end of a gun and then proceeded to suck my wound. He said he was sucking out poison and that he wasn't sure that he had got it all out. I didn't believe him, but he called up six other of my men, and among them they threw me on the ground and cauterized the wound thoroughly with firebrands. During the proceeding I bit Kazi Moto, who was sitting on my head, rather severely, but he never bore any malice about it.

The cattle being my only visible wealth and the cattle being all gone, all my men except Kazi Moto ran away, taking their loads with them in lieu of wages; and Kazi Moto and I set out to reach Muanza, a place nearly two hundred miles away, where the nearest doctor was. By the time I reached there I was naturally about all in, although, but for the fact that it was full of insects, my wound was not so bad as might have been expected.

The Germans were not at all pleased to see me, but, as I had developed black-water fever, they gave me a place to go away and die in. It was a dark and very dirty shed with a grass roof, which, besides me and Kazi Moto, had to shelter nearly all the rats in East Africa. Kazi Moto used to go out every day and steal things for me to eat, and once a day the doctor would come, look at me, give me a bottle of physic, grunt and go out again.

ONE morning he brought a sergeant with him and I heard him say to the sergeant, "All right . . . he'll be dead by this afternoon . . . you'd better send the chain-gang over to the burial-ground and get his grave dug, then we can get him out of the way before dark."

He didn't come in that morning, but just looked at me through the door; what he said to the sergeant, though, did me more good than all his physic. Up to that time I had not particularly wanted to get well; I had neither money nor prospects and was feeling much too ill to care, and I haven't the least doubt that if he had said nothing I would have died either that day or the day following. But I hated the man so, and was so utterly disgusted with his treatment of me, that I made up my mind to disappoint him, and from that minute I began to get better. When the chain-gang came with a sack to tie me up in I was sitting up with the aid of Kazi Moto. Two days later I leaned on Kazi Moto's shoulder and walked out to have a look at the grave; I was so weak that I very nearly tumbled into it.

Until then it had never once occurred to me that I had found out nearly enough for a young man of my age; but, looking into it, and back across it, I realized that, although I had done absolutely nothing to be proud of I had really acquired quite a lot of information. I sat there for about an hour, thinking; and at the end of it I pushed some dirt down into the grave as a sort of concrete sign that I had buried the old wanderlust at the bottom of it and would try henceforward to put my garnered knowledge to some use. I have not wandered more than twelve or thirteen thousand miles since.

I did a good bit of trekking about German East Africa after I got better, but this time always with a view to making money; and when I found that I could not make more than enough to live on, I decided to go up to British East again. So I took passage on a dhow, and that was another choice experience. The dhow was about thirty-five feet long over all and was loaded down with cargo. The cargo was covered with a sort of thatched roof, under which, and on top of the sacks of peanuts and drums of ghee, I and Kazi Moto, two native women, two babies, two goats, some chickens and eleven other natives including the crew had to exist. The voyage lasted ten days and it rained in torrents the whole time. When we made a smudge to drive out the mosquitoes the smoke was intolerable, and when we threw the smudge overboard the mosquitoes swarmed in like a hungry army.

ONE night the native who was sleeping next to me died (of pneumonia I think); I felt his back getting colder and colder but I had no idea that he was dead until the morning. They carried him ashore, and buried him in my blanket.

I did all right up in British East, for I secured a road contract, and, when I made good on that, the Government gave me an official job. But the climate where I was was awfully unhealthy; I had made up my mind by that time to write stories, and I had to work too hard to be able to find time for writing. In addition to that, people had a distressing habit of committing suicide there; they did it one after another, and that kind of thing gets on your nerves after a while.

I saw two native campaigns, but they weren't sufficiently exciting to make up for the depressing surroundings during all the rest of the time. A final dose of black-water fever convinced me that I had had enough of Africa, so I paid off Kazi Moto and sailed for Europe. Before I left, Kazi Moto stole my razors, watch, camp-kit and some of my money, but I don't grudge him any of it. I had intended to give him everything except the watch, so he didn't get much more than he was entitled to anyhow. He was a good man, and he saved my life four separate times.

EUROPE turned out to be as amusing and as comfortable and as unsatisfactory as ever when I got there. So I held the map and used the pricker. Others maintained that I made it come down in the U. S. A. on purpose. At all events I am glad that it did so.

Now that's a deuce of a long talk about very little, isn't it! But I've left a whole lot out. What I've tried to do is to prove that I've met real live men and seen them behave under all sorts of conditions, and that I've suffered with them and seen what they've seen and laughed with them sufficiently to be able to understand them and their motives. And consequently I claim that the people in my stories are real people who are worth writing about.

That is the only claim that a writer-man has any right to make. He himself, his private life, and his present possessions are matters of absolutely no importance; but his experience does count, because that is his only qualification, barring of course the

technical knowledge that he can learn at school.

It goes without saying that there are different sorts of experience which are suitable for different styles of writing. Mine has been mixed and varied, and I try to write various stories. I have dined with a prince, who was afterward a king, and also at a Chinaman's table between my host and a buck Zulu; it doesn't matter which experience I liked best; the point is that I have sampled both. I have earned my living carrying sacks of potatoes at the wharf-side, and I have also had a very good time indeed in certain London clubs; and in between those two walks in life are an unnumbered host of others, many of which I have come into contact with at one time or another.

I claim to be nothing but a lineal descendant of the old-time story-teller, who spun his yarn and passed the hat round. Nowadays it is the editor who passes round the hat, and he is rather more particular than the old-time capper used to be; but the effect is just the same. The public pays, and the public calls the tune. I believe, too, that the public likes to know now, just as much as it did then, that the man who spins the yarn has seen the things he writes about. I have no other excuse for discussing myself and my wanderings over so many pages.—TALBOT MUNDY.

APOLOGIES for a break in one of our stories. In a poker game one of the characters "filled a bob-tail flush from the middle." I'm not that innocent. Neither is Mr. Noyes or any one else on our staff. Nor the author. But the mistake got by, just the same.

I don't usually "pass the buck," but at least I'd like to explain that I've grown pretty rusty as to poker, though not rusty enough to hunt for the middle of an ordinary flush. Once, in my early twenties, I sat in on an innocent little game of penny-ante, filled a royal flush from the middle, won two copper cents, decided that poker was not my game and have never played it since.

BETEL nuts. An answer of Captain Dingle's in "Ask Adventure" brought a letter from O. W. S., which follows. Also Captain Dingle's reply, of which I give only parts, since on most points the two seem merely to be saying the same thing in different words.

Ancon, C. Z.

I believe you wish to have any mistakes corrected which may be published in your magazine and I am taking the liberty of writing you regarding, what I believe to be, a mistake, in your issue of Sept. 3, 1918, regarding the betel-nut, as described by Captain Dingle.

In the beginning I wish to state that I have spent the last nineteen years in the Orient, principally in the Philippines, as soldier, hunter, and in public health work. I recently transferred to Panama. The betel-nut, with its covering, is as large as a hen's egg and resembles a small coconut when the coco-nut is green. The betel-nut grows on a palm which resembles the coco-nut palm, but does not grow as large nor tall. The natives prepare it for chewing by placing a paste made of lime on an aromatic leaf taken from a vine called *itchmo*, and this leaf and lime are folded around a small piece of the kernel of the betel-nut and all chewed together. Betel-nut chewing is a filthy habit and soon destroys the teeth and then the user is compelled to crush his betel-nut mixture, in a small bamboo tube made for the purpose, with a sharp-pointed metal blade.

I don't think I ever saw a betel-nut chewer over forty years of age who had many teeth left, and they were black and decayed from the filthy habit.—O. W. S.

Pembroke West, Bermuda.

I have Mr. S.'s kick about my dope on betel chewing, and have hunted up the only question and answer I have handled on this subject. The results are, that all Mr. S.'s complaint is due to the trifling mistake on my part in assuming that the betel-nut grew on the same plant which supplied the aromatic leaf.

I freely admit my error in that, and thank Mr. S. for his information. I was always under the impression that the nut was the fruit of the climbing pepper; the mistake was easy to make. . . .

As for the method of using, Mr. S. simply corroborates my own statement, but takes exception to the leaf used. He names the Philippine leaf *Itchmo*, simply calling it an aromatic leaf. As a matter of plain fact, this aromatic leaf is nothing but the leaf of the climbing pepper alluded to above, and is not called Itchmo anywhere outside the Philippines. It is a local name. But the plant, the Betel Pepper, is known wherever else the betel grows, all over the Malay Peninsula, India, and Borneo (to a somewhat lesser degree). . . .

One other point, the preservation of the teeth. This, too, is a moot question. I have seen a great many betel chewers with fine teeth, although the teeth were discolored black. As for chewers over forty rarely having teeth, I would add that non-chewers among Eastern natives rarely have many teeth after that age.—A. E. DINGLE.

IT'S been a long time since we've had a story from Charles Wesley Sanders and it happens that, not through his fault, he had never introduced himself to Camp-Fire as is our custom. Here he is now:

Madison, Ohio.

At the age of twelve ran away from school because the teacher insisted on attempting to make me sing the scale before the other pupils. Knew then that I could never sing, and am now more than ever convinced. The powers that held destiny in their hands thought work might make the schoolroom look more inviting, so a place in the general offices of the Nickel Plate Railroad at Cleveland was secured for me. By hovering over sounders when idle, which was a good deal of the time, became somewhat proficient in the telegraphers' art. The manager of the general offices died. The superintendent of telegraph wrote a letter a few days later.

"You'd better read that," he said to me, one of whose duties was the copying of such letters.

THE letter appointed one of the operators to take the place of the man who had died. I was made the operator at the bottom of the list—then fifteen years old. The next year was made night operator in the same office. One reason for this was that I was able to "set in" an old-fashioned Millikin repeater, which was the despair of most operators. Didn't know then just how I did the trick and don't know now. Suspect the repeater was like a balky horse that would consent to be driven only once in a while.

In this year began to regret running away from the vocalizing teacher. Saw that an operator, however, except those working heavy circuits, can go to school while he works. A gentle Episcopalian minister initiated me into the mysteries of Latin and English, so that running away from school didn't prove so disastrous as it might have done.

SOME years later went into newspaper work. Was blown into recognition. The second week was assigned by the city editor to cover a section of the city while a street railway strike was in progress. Cars were being blown up all over town. One Sunday night a reporter for a rival paper and myself were waiting for a car at a cross street. The car came along and innocently slid into an open switch. By the time it had been put on the track again a score of passengers were waiting. Did the passengers let this first car go ahead and run into whatever explosive might have been placed on the track? They did not. Every one of them piled upon this car. Three blocks away a lead pipe filled with nitroglycerin had been placed on the track. Just before the car came to the pipe the other reporter put his hand on my arm.

"Say," he began.

But he never said it. There was a roar that shook that section of the city. The floor of the car was blown out and the trolley-pole blown off. The motorman landed on his ear on the pavement and the car sped ahead, dust-filled and dark, till it stopped of its own accord. The other reporter and I had been sitting in a rear seat. We were not hurt, but men and women in front of us were screaming and shouting. After helping the injured passengers as much as possible, we scudded for telephones and sent bulletins to the city editor. The bulletins were in the offices a few minutes after the explosion. The city editors called it "good work," which is often another name for pure luck.

WHILE working in the telegraph office at a coal dock I once let a train get by and found myself in a situation much used in fiction, but no fictionist has adequately described the sensations that come to a man in that predicament. The despatcher had sent an order for a certain train. When the train had passed I found the order lying on the table, broke in on the train wire and notified the despatcher.

"All right," said the despatcher laconically, "the other train isn't by 'DK' yet."

"DK" was at the far end of a double track and the train which hadn't got its order reached the near end and safety before a collision was possible. I watched my mail closely for a week, but no letter concerning the incident ever came. The despatcher had kept his own counsel.

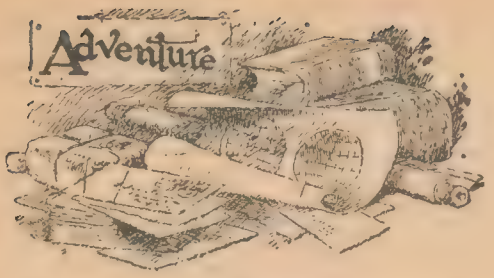
Since then have been city editor of all Cleveland papers but one, and night editor and managing editor of one of the three.—CHARLES WESLEY SANDERS.

A LETTER from Captain George Ash, written last Summer from Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Federated Malay States, near Singapore, Malay Straits, stated he was "going into the interior of these Straits for two or more months" and asked us to "advertise" and hold any letters that came to him in our care. We try to be of service to this comrade but my private opinion is that wireless is the only thing likely to reach him. He hops all over the map and a forwarded letter has to have very long legs to reach him before the next hop. However, we've been trying to handle mail for him for years, he's very welcome and, as he continues to use our forwarding service, a letter must reach him now and then.

The letter before this one was written from Manila, whither he had come from Japan.—ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

LOOKING AHEAD FOR DEMOCRACY

(Owing to temporary illness, this department is omitted this issue.)



VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES FREE TO ANY READER

THESE services of *Adventure* are free to *any one*. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules*, thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we *can* help you we're ready and willing to try.

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

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A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

Back Issues of *Adventure*

WANTED: Copies of *Adventure* of dates December 1915, January 1916, and February 1916. Cash forwarded on receipt of bill including postage.—CAPT. DINGLE, Hamilton, Bermuda.

WILL SELL: May to November, 1914, and November, 1915—$1.00. January to December, 1917—$2.40. January to December, 1918—$3.60. 46 numbers for $7.00, charges collect.—ALFRED BOWMAN, Room 9, Brush St. Station, G. T. Ry., Detroit, Mich.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Addresses

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. First suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 1302 N St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

High-School Volunteers of the U. S.—An organization promoting a democratic system of military training in American high schools. Address *Everybody's*, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

Remember

Magazines are made up ahead of time. An item received today is too late for the current issue; allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

1. ★ Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Also temporarily covering South American coast from Valparaiso south around the Cape and up to the River Plate. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea Part 1
B. W. BRINTNALL, 5527 33d Ave., N. E., Seattle, Wash. Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S. and British Empire; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. ★ The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Such questions as pertain to the sea, ships and men, local to the U. S., should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brintnall.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay: river, lake and road travel, game, fish and woodcraft; trapping, freshwater pearls, herbs; and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Johnson City, Tenn. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina, Florida and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine. Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Western U. S. Part 1
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

8. Western U. S. Part 2
CAPT.-ADJ. JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, care *Adventure*. Covering the Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas. Hunting, fishing, travel. *Especially*, early history of Missouri Valley.

9. Middle Western U. S. Part 3
JOHN B. THOMPSON, 4249A Juniata St., St. Louis, Mo. Covering Missouri, Arkansas and the Missouri Valley up to Omaha. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big timber sections.

10. Western U. S. Part 4 and Mexico Part 1
J. W. ROBERTSON, 912 W. Lynn Street, Austin, Texas. Covering Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and the border states of old Mexico: Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas.

11. Mexico Part 2
WILLIAM BROCKWAY, Oriental Park, Marianao, Cuba. Covering Central and Southern Mexico below a line drawn from Tampico to Mazatlan. History, geography, customs, government, animals, minerals, products and industries.

12. North American Snow Countries Part 1
ROBERT E. PINKERTON, 817 N. Catalina Ave., Pasadena,

(Enclose addressed envelope with 5 cents in coin, NOT stamps)
Return postage not required from U. S. or Canadian soldiers, sailors or marines in service outside the U. S., its possessions or Canada.

Calif. Covering Minnesota, Wisconsin, Manitoba, a strip of Ontario between Minn. and C. P. Ry. Canoes and snowshoes; methods and materials of Summer and Winter subsistence, shelter and travel, for recreation or business.

13. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 2
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit.

14. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. Covering southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing.

15. North American Snow Countries Part 4
ED. L. CARSON, Clear Lake, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

16. North American Snow Countries Part 5
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Covering Alaska. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipments, clothing, food, physics, hygiene; mountain work.

17. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, 81 Court St., Brooklyn, N. Y. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

18. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, Honolulu, T. H. Covering customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

19. Asia, Southern
GORDON MCCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; hunting, trading, traveling.

20. Japan and Korea
(Editor to be appointed.) Covering travel, hunting, customs of people, art and curios. (Mr. Ritchie, the former editor of this section, is now in France. His section is accordingly in abeyance until we can find a suitable successor.)

21. Russia and Eastern Siberia
CAPTAIN A. M. LOCHWITZKY (formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), Quartermaster, U.S. Troops, Mercedes, Texas. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalin; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

22. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, Eagle Bird Mine, Washington, Nevada County, Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

23. Africa Part 2
GEORGE E. HOLT, Frederick, Md. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, etc.

24. ★ Africa Part 3. Portuguese East Africa
R. W. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Covering trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc.

25. Africa Part 4. Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East Africa, Uganda and the Upper Congo
CHARLES BEADLE, care Authors' League of America, 33 West 42d St., New York. Covering geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, opportunities for adventure and sport.

26. ★ New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen.

27. Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, 1106 Van Nuys Bldg., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, H. I.] Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen., Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner; R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Commission, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't. of Com., Wash., D. C.

* (*Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached*)

The following "Ask Adventure" editors are now serving in our military forces. We hope you will be patient if their answers are at times delayed: Capt.-Adj. Joseph Mills Hanson; Capt. A. M. Lochwitzky.

Sailors' Long for B. C.

IT HAS been said that, before this war at least, the Navy did its most effective recruiting in the Middle West, among boys who had never smelled salt water in their lives. Do sailors want to farm it for old sake's sake? Or just because it's different?

Question:—"Not being a letter-writer I will attempt to make my wants known in the shortest manner possible. A party of two and possibly three or four want to take up land in British Columbia in a part on some river or lake not too far from the coast where there is good land, plenty of hunting and fishing, where we could combine farming for profit with pleasure such as good hunting, fishing and trapping.

"We are not inexperienced kids, having spent some time on the road in all parts of the country. Also have worked in the lumber-camps and sawmills of California, Oregon, Minnesota; on ranches (cattle and sheep) as well as wheat ranches in Washington, Kansas, Iowa, Minnesota, etc. We like the life in the open, having had some experience in shop work in the cities. Would prefer out-door work which we could appreciate after spending some time in New York, Philadelphia and other cities of the Eastern States. We are now in the Navy and would like to go to British Columbia after the war.

"Would like to know the chances of taking up land under the British Government. Would we have to be British citizens? What would be the expenses for our outfits (we are not bankers' sons).

"What provision would we make for the future before leaving the States? Give us some idea of the regulations governing homesteading and proving up on land in British Columbia and any other information you think might be handy."—W. J. MOORE, U. S. S. *Fanning*, care of Postmaster, New York.

Answer, by Mr. Carson:—The homesteading laws are very reasonable. It is necessary to declare intention of becoming a citizen before locating and actually to do so before receiving a patent for the

land. A quarter section, 160 acres, may then be filed on. The residence and improvement stipulations are easy and flexible.

Write the Deputy Minister of Lands, Victoria, B. C., for full details. Also ask him to send you maps and other information with regard to the Endako River and Ootsa Lake Region as I think this would be about the place to suit you and your party. Here are my reasons:

The soil is good with considerable open meadow land. Lightly wooded but plenty of timber for building and fuel. Stock Winters out. Good hunting and fishing. Plenty of deer, a few bear and a fair amount of fur to be taken by reasonably skilful trapping. No license required for trapping.

Comparatively easy of access, and employment may be obtained if needed to fatten the grub stake. As to the amount of capital required to successfully hold down a grant, it has been done with $300 but double that amount is just twice as good.

How to Become a Ship's Officer

CONDITIONS may have changed somewhat since Mr. Brintnall answered this inquirer—the correspondence took place some time prior to the signing of the peace armistice—but in all or most essentials his information still holds good:

Question:—"Regarding opening for myself in the Merchant Marine.

"I have a good education (college), and good body, have traveled more than the average, am twenty-five years of age. Sea service in Pacific steam vessels (freight) is what I wish.

"Is there any other apprentice method on the Pacific than in a U. S. Shipping Board training-vessel? How about schools in navigation training for officers' ratings?

"You will understand that I am relatively ignorant in the matter; give me your best information."—GROVER C. YOUNG, Faith, So. Dak.

Answer, by Mr. Brintnall:—In order to become a ship's officer you must first have had two years' experience at sea. To get this you must be a common seaman for that time. There is a big demand for seamen and there are training-ships in nearly every large port.

After you have had your two years' experience you take an examination before the U. S. Local Inspectors in the port at which you find yourself. It is common talk that the examinations are easier on this coast than on the Atlantic.

If you are a college man and have had trig you will have no trouble mastering all the navigation you will require to pass the examination. Men who can neither read or write bone up and take the exams in a few weeks.

A great many ships are being built on this coast now and they all go to the Atlantic coast from here so you can get on one of them without any trouble at either Seattle, Portland or San Francisco. Nearly all of the local shipping is now being done by the Japanese liners at present because most all of the American shipping is needed for transportation to Europe, but you could get on the coast boats to Alaska or to the South.

The Trapper's Reward

TRAPPING is a hard, cold, disagreeable gamble, and the returns don't justify the labor, take it from Mr. Pinkerton:

Question:—"I am seeking information on the upper peninsula of Michigan in regards to a hunting trip. What hunting is there to be done there in the Winter and Spring? What region would you advise for hunting and trapping? What kind of clothing and provisions would you advise? Also firearms?

"My partner and I are both used to outdoor life but don't know much about that particular part of this State. Please write and advise."—FOREST POWERS, Detroit, Mich.

Answer, by Mr. Pinkerton:—While I can't give you specific information as to the best hunting districts and trapping territories, I do know that you can find both in the upper peninsula. It is thirteen years since I have been in that part of the country and things change very rapidly in that sort of a district.

I always advise any one against trying to earn a living by trapping as I have seen so many fail at it. At the best, it is mostly hard work, and the financial returns seldom meet the grub bill. The best trappers have to work through the Summer at something or other, and the best man, white, I know in Ontario, does well, he thinks, if he takes in $350 in a Winter.

I also advise any one thinking of such a step to go into the country in the Summer. It is only by looking over the land yourself that you can pick it out. Trappers I know always spend the Summer traveling around, watching game, looking for signs, getting their cabins built, and so on. Then the first of October they begin cutting trails, and by the last of the month they are ready for the Winter's work. A lot of preparation is necessary.

I would start in the middle of the Summer with a canoe in northern Michigan or, preferably, northern Minnesota, and paddle around until I learned the country thoroughly and found the best places for game. A man might trap out a district one Winter and leave it bare for the next. Then by Fall I would be certain and be ready, and then I'd look forward to a lot of hard, cold, disagreeable work. Believe me, for I've been there more than once.

I am sorry there has been a delay in answering this letter, but I have been in a hospital and this is the first day I have been able to write since getting out.

The Hunting-Knife

HEREWITH Mr. Sangster settles out of his own experience a question which has at one time or another agitated nearly every sportsman:

Question:—"Please advise me where I can buy a sure-enough sticker (Hudson Bay knife) and what the price is.

"I intend to go to the Philippine Islands soon and would like to get this knife before going across, also a plain leather sheath for it.

"I want a knife with a twelve-inch blade, with either a bone or tough wood handle, that can stand

the hard knocks that a knife will get in field use.

"Saw your name in *Adventure*, and a notice saying, 'Ask if you don't know,' so I am writing to you and hope that I am not bothering you much.

"If you know any place where such knives as this are made, I would like to ask that you write them to get in touch with me at once.

"I will not take up more of your time now, but before closing I would say that if you are ever down in this section (or over in the Islands) and want to find a camp where the billy-can is never empty and there is always room to spread your blankets by the fire, just ask for 'Army' and you will be as welcome as all outdoors."—LEWIS R. ARMSTRONG, 1st Sergeant, 15 Co., 4 Tr. Bn., 157 D. B., Camp Gordon, Ga.

Answer, by Mr. Sangster:—Your request for data on a hunting-knife. There is no such thing to-day as a special H. B. knife.

The best knives I know of as sheath knives are those manufactured by the Marble Manufacturing Company, Gladstone, Mich., and which can generally be obtained at any modern sporting-goods store.

As a primary skinning-knife I recommend their "Woodcraft" model. For general purposes their "Expert" model. Sheaths are included with knives. Anything Marble makes can be banked on. I say this although I hold no brief for the company whatever.

Thanks for your invitation. If ever down that way I'll look you up, but presently I go North. Good luck.

Australia and Tasmania

TO MOST of us England's big colonies in the South Seas are a closed book. Mr. Goldie's letter may prove a revelation:

Question:—"Please inform me on the possibilities of establishing chemical industries in Australia and Tasmania. Are there any such industries there at the present time? What resources do these countries have that would be of value to a company interested in chemical products?

"Also how about mining in these countries? Have they any mines or undeveloped resources of that nature? What attitude does the Government take toward enterprises I have mentioned, especially those not of British extraction?

"Inclosed please find stamped, self-addressed envelope."—T. E. DUNLAP, Seattle, Wash.

Answer, by Mr. Goldie:—The best answer I can give to your questions is that Australia, including Tasmania and other adjacent islands, forms a territory larger than the United States and equally resourceful in every respect.

This is a fact that the average American can not comprehend. It seems incredible to him that out in the South Seas, which are chiefly associated in his mind with naked savages who need reformation, and enchanting stories by Robert Louis Stevenson, Jack London and James Francis Dwyer, there can be such a vast continent which gives every promise of becoming as rich a country as the United States.

You ask if there is any mining in these countries. Have you never heard of the great gold rushes of the fifties and sixties—the discovery of the wonderful riches of Bendigo and Ballarat? Do you not remember the amazing wealth of gold that was unearthed at Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie in Western Australia toward the end of last century? Have you never read of the romance of Broken Hill and of how seven men working on a sheep station in the far interior of Australia found a ridge of hills in the midst of an area of desert marked down on the Government maps as worthless and which they decided to prospect with the result that within ten years, those hills were producing one-thirteenth part of the world's total production of silver besides vast quantities of lead and zinc?

Do you know nothing of the great silver-lead mines of the west coast of Tasmania, or of Mt. Bischoff, also situated on that coast and which is one of the largest tin mines in the world? Have you never heard of Mt. Morgan in Northern Queensland—a gold-field which, in its best producing years, has broken all world records for gold production?

Yes, sir, there are mines in Australia—mines of every kind, yielding every class of mineral; and there are vast areas waiting to be mined and which in the years to come will, if the earth fulfils its promise, yield wealth greater than can now be imagined. In gold-mining there has been a falling off during recent years, the production for 1917 having been only $30,779,185 as against $70,028,680 in 1901.

The opening up of the vast interior by the transcontinental railway which was completed a few months ago will doubtless lead to further discoveries, particularly when the Anzacs return and to satisfy their love of adventure go prospecting through this country. The production of silver and lead averages about $15,000,000 per annum, while the value of copper products amounts to over $20,000,000, tin about $5,000,000 and coal over $20,000,000.

Answering your inquiry as to whether there are any chemical industries in Australia, I can tell you that there is now considerable activity in this direction and that about $8,000,000 worth of drugs and chemicals are being manufactured annually. The country possesses almost every kind of product needed for these industries.

Yes, the Government does assist mining and legitimate manufacturing enterprises and encourages men of all the white races to settle there—excepting Germans. I will be glad to furnish any further information in my power.

The Story of Tehuantepec

THINK of owning twenty-two towns outright, together with twenty-three thousand people with the power of life and death over them! That was the loot enjoyed by one soldier of fortune:

Question:—"Will you kindly give me all the information possible of Tehuantepec, the people, customs, animals, minerals and of the Tejuana Indians especially. Are they friendly toward Americans in this part of the country? What kind of a city is the Port of Mexico, eastern terminus of the National of Tehuantepec Railway?

"What, if any, are the opportunities for a civil engineer and a telegraph operator in this part of the country? If no opportunities there, what other cities would you suggest trying? How about Tampico, Texpam, Torreon, Monterey, Guadalajara or

Mexico City? Don't suppose they feel very friendly toward Americans in these cities at present.

"Any information you can offer will certainly be appreciated."—C. C. ZOLLARS, McCoy, Colo.

Answer, by Mr. Whiteaker, Mr. Brockway's predecessor:—Your letter of inquiry about Tehuantepec was received during my long absence from home, so excuse delay in answering.

The Isthmus of Tehuantepec, in the tropic zone of southern Mexico—which stretches across the States of Vera Cruz and Oaxaca, seven thousand feet below the great Mexico table land, and along the narrowest part of the republic with a trend from north to south, and which represents one of the shortest transcontinental routes in America—came into history during a conversation between Montezuma II and Hernan Cortez, in which the latter asked the monarch where his vassals secured so much of the precious gold. Montezuma named several places, among them the region which lies near the old city of Tehuantepec.

Soon after (1522) Cortez sent Pizarro—the future conqueror of Peru—and several of his soldiers on an exploring expedition through the isthmian district. Pizarro returned not only with gold, but with information relating to the proximity of a great ocean, discovered afterward by Vasco Nuñez de Balboa and named the Pacific (calm).

After two other expeditions with favorable reports, Cortez visited the region himself while on his memorable expedition to Honduras in 1524. The Spanish emperor made him a grant of land in that region, and with it he conferred upon Cortez the title of Marquis.

Cortez was known thereafter as the Marquis of the Valley (of Oaxaca), and the land was held by his descendants until comparatively recent times. The grant included twenty-two towns and about twenty-three thousand vassals, including their lands and subordinate hamlets, civil and criminal jurisdiction, offices and rentals, and with full power to dispose thereof according to his pleasure and that of his heirs. It is curious to note that the land passed into the hands of the Real Estate Company of Mexico in 1908.

Tehuantepec (Hill of the Tehuanas), one hundred and twenty-five feet high, population ten thousand four hundred, second city of the State of Oaxaca, situated on the Tehuantepec River, twenty-one miles from the port of Salina Cruz, is the most picturesque town on the isthmus and the stronghold of the original inhabitants of this region. It is noted for its earthquakes, hot springs and handsome women.

The Tehuanas men were almost all killed during the war for independence and now there are about five women to one man. As a rule, the women are pure bloods, thrifty, animated and more enterprising than the men. Many of them engage in business. They bathe often and are clean—are more like the Burmese than Mexicans in both customs and dress. The current language is Jepotic or Tehuana; the pure-blood natives are supposed to be the descendants of the once powerful Zapotecs, who built the now ruined palaces of Mitla.

The jungle through which the train runs is full of all kinds of birds and animals, including black bear, gray fox, mountain deer, tapir, jaguar, tiger-cat, flying squirrels, ducks, geese and wild turkeys.

The town of Puerto Mexico, State of Vera Cruz, on the Gulf of Mexico, the eastern terminus of the Tehuantepec National Railroad, situated at the mouth of the Coatzacoalcos River, is a sandy place on the slope of a range of hills, barren toward the sea but green inland, with the beach as its main street. The local market, the most animated spot in town, is an interesting place; and here curious fish are brought from the gulf, also many fine fruits from the mainland.

The climate is hot and fevers abound. I know nothing of conditions there since the world war began and to be on the safe side you'd better stay out of Mexico for the present.—J. W. WHITEAKER.

Pearls and Ambergris

CAPTAIN DINGLE makes us acquainted with the titles of a couple of books that sound mighty interesting:

Question:—"I would appreciate your answering the following questions as to markets and prices on:

"1. The pink pearl found in the conch shell of the Bahamas and West Indies.

"2. Ambergris.

"3. The regular salt-water pearl of the West Indies."—FRANK EMMERLING.

Answer, by Captain Dingle:—Market prices of anything just now are scarcely reliable. In any case, pearls vary so greatly in individual value, from quality, size, etc., that each practically has its own market value. I suggest that you secure books on this subject, such as Lippincotts' "The Pearl; Its Story, Charm and Value," or "Pearls, and How to Value Them," by Herman Myer. The first you can get from Lippincotts, Philadelphia, the second from Herman Myer, 41 Maiden Lane, New York, and in either you can discover a lot which will guide you in valuing your own pearls.

Ambergris, too, is subject to great fluctuations in price, and just now is very valuable because of scarcity. But I believe most of the stories of seamen finding a lump as big as a man's head, which makes a boat-crew fabulously wealthy, are greatly exaggerated. In this regard I believe you can get reliable information from the Bureau of Fisheries, Washington, D. C., which will also give you information about pearl fisheries if you ask.

Sorry to be of so little assistance to you; but in fact market prices of any such articles as these scarcely fall within my field. I could tell you better where such things were likely to be found than how to sell them or what to ask for them.

How to Avoid Malaria

LOUISIANA is a great State, but even so her natives are doubtless willing to admit that Northerners are liable to malaria in her low-lying areas:

Question:—"Unless this is too much out of your line will you please tell me the names of steamship companies that carry passengers and freight between St. Louis and New Orleans, or between any intermediate points. Object. I am going to paint ships for Uncle Sam down at Slidell, Louisiana, and as I have to pay my own fare, I would like to travel on the Mississippi River.

"Is there a steamship line between Memphis and New Orleans? Do you know what the fare is? Can you give me information about health conditions down there? Thanking you for an early reply."—MAX E. TULKE.

Answer, by Mr. Liebe:—I can not tell you the names of steamship companies on the Mississippi, but there are steamer lines (these are river steamers, you understand) between Memphis and New Orleans, as well as between New Orleans and points further upon the river. I am of the opinion, however, that you would find it more expeditious to travel by rail. I do not know what the fare would be. This is a thing that is constantly being revised upward, you know.

As to the health conditions down in Louisiana, I can tell you about that. Drink good water, keep clear of mosquitoes, keep away from swamps and especially after sunset and before sunrise don't breathe swamp air, or you are likely to have malaria. Don't let yourself get bilious. Lemons are mighty good for Northerners who go to Louisiana. Fall is the right time of year to go to Louisiana, by the way. By going then the Summer will come upon you gradually, and the Summer is the time when malaria gets one.

Hitting Asia on Spec

ONCE again the warning is emphasized that bitter disappointment awaits the whites who go to Asia or Africa with the expectation of picking up a good job:

Question:—"I am going to ask you a pretty big question but I hope that it will not prove too much for you.

"What do you think are the chances for employment for an American in China or in the Malay States?

"Have you any idea what the working conditions are there?

"Have a small amount of clerical experience, also in electricity and mechanics and desire employment in this section if possible.

"Please do not publish my name.

"Have been here on the canal (in the Army) for the past two and one-half years and if I can be of any help to the Ask Adventure will be glad to do all I can."

Answer, by Mr. McCreagh:—Your question is one which I am very often called upon to answer, and I am sorry to say that I can give you no more encouragement than I have to any of the others.

First, you must understand that in the countries you are interested in all the lesser clerical jobs are held by natives of the country who can work for about one-tenth of what a white man can exist on. These jobs, even if a white man were willing in his desperation to take one of them, are not open to him for the reason that the white man's prestige must be upheld and he can not be permitted to work in competition with the native.

The better jobs—of which there are many—are given to the people who have the necessary drag with the high officials of the firms in question. *Sometimes*, if a man is right on the spot, and is lucky, and if his personal address happens to strike the fancy of some boss, he will get one of these good jobs. But that means that a man must have enough money to live on for a few months until such a stroke of luck may come his way. You must figure about a hundred dollars a month as an average living scale.

I'm sorry I can't encourage you. But I speak from experience when I say that a colored man's country is an awful place for a white man to go broke in.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

LUNTZEL, ALFRED. Last heard of in El Paso. Or any one in F Co., First Terr. Vol. Inf. 1898. Address—HERMAN J. LOVE, McGill, Nevada.

BEASLEY, TOM H. "RED". Oil-field worker, last heard from at Electra, Texas. Any one knowing his whereabouts please communicate with his sister, MRS. E. W. HART (Maggie Beasley), 1212 Prairie Ave., Houston, Texas.

CLANCY, R. L. About 30 years old; two scars under chin, and one on forehead; dark complexion. Last seen in Texas. Any information will be appreciated by his brother. Address—A. J. CLANCY, U. S. Naval Hospital, Ward D, Great Lakes, Ill.

DUVAL, JACK E JR. Last heard of in Akron, Ohio, about two years ago. Any information concerning him will be greatly appreciated by his father. Address—JACK E. DUVAL, SR., 117 Cooper St., Atlanta, Ga.

RAHAL, JOE. Black hair, dark eyes, and a good mixer. Left Crystal Beach, Ontario, for Mexican border, August, 1918. Write "Texas" from Crystal Beach. Address—RAYMOND GRAY, care of *Adventure*.

AYLES, LEON W. AND TESSIE. Last heard of in North Jay, Maine. Their father was a stone-quarrier. Any information concerning them will be greatly appreciated by their mother's sister. Address—MISS EMMA MCCOLLUM, 85 Beacon St., Chelsea, Mass.

LYON, HENRY. About 19 years of age, 5 feet 8 inches in height, heavy set, interested in movies, guns, and the outdoors. Last heard of in Denver, Colo., Sept., 1918, where he joined the signal corps of the army. Address—W. BRENIMAN, Fort Collins, Colo.

WILSON, CHRISTOPHER TERRY. Of Moores, Delaware Co., Pa. Last heard of at 369] Bergen St., Brooklyn. Was on the U. S. S. *Delaware*, 1909—1913. Any information would be appreciated by his old shipmate. Address—AUBREY L. BASS, C. M. M. Naval Aeronautic Station, Hampton Roads, Va.

ROBINSON, WILLIAM. Father's only brother, born February 1790. Apprenticed to pawnbroker in Dublin, 1803, age thirteen years. Served eight or nine years. 1811-12 to sea with Captains Kennedy and Crawford, trading to and from West Indies for about three years. Located at Jamaica one year with a gentleman learning planting, etc., at St. Mary's Parish. Supposed to have remained in Jamaica seven or eight years. Last letter from him, about 1821, referred to opinion of doctor and operation in left side; change of climate recommended. Passage in brig *Francis Lucy* bound for Pictou, N. S. Address—WM. B. ROBINSON, 59 Vandam St., New York, N. Y.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

KIRK, HOWARD. Worked in the Beaver Board Co., of Buffalo, N. Y., about February, 1916. When I last heard from him he was in Jersey City, New Jersey. Have written there but received no answer. Address—H. L. VAN ALLEN, 1408½ So. Burlington Ave., Los Angeles, Calif.

JOHNSTONE, ANDRES RINTOUL. Last heard of in Chitina, Alaska, Oct., 1910. At that time interested with Captain L. N. Erickson and H. S. Dean in some quarter claims. Age 37, blue eyes, fair hair, about 5 feet 11 inches in height. Any information will be thankfully received and acknowledged. Address—WM. RINTOUL, 612 Seventh Ave., E., Vancouver, B. C.

RELATIVES of THOMAS SCULLY. Father said to have been killed in railroad wreck. Mother died in County Hospital, Chicago, before which she stayed with some friends. Would like to locate them or any one who knew my people. Address—THOMAS SCULLY, care of *Adventure*.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

FRIBERT, FREAD. Dark brown hair; weighs about 135 pounds; about 5 feet 8 inches in height. Last heard from in Niagara Falls. Any information concerning him will be greatly appreciated by his brother. Address—WALTER FRIBERT, 232 East 5th St., Chester, Pa.

THE following have been inquired for in full in either the First March or Mid-March issues of Adventure. They can get name of inquirer from this magazine:

ALLAN, HUGHIE V.; Anderson, Carl or Charles; Bareda, St. Revato; Bastla, Clifford S.; Bergstrom, Albin; Brown, Grace Florence; Clarke, James; Classant, Henri de; Clayton, George; Clifton, Mrs. Harry; Devine, Dan; Dietz, Mrs. Will; Dorians, Mildred; Hackett, Clyde O.; Harris, Fred; Haydon, Dewey; Houdyshelt, Jasper E.; Kelly, Robert E.; King, G. E.; Kirby, Willie Holbert; MacCracken, John Alcorn; Maguire, George; Malone, Dan C.; McCormack, L.; Miline, or McGregor, Scotty; Miller, Goldberg, Burk, Arbogast, Kane; Nichols, Frank Butler; Paffman, George; Porterfield, Wellington or Kelly William; Reilly, O'Leary Savage, T. C. Collins; Shatswell, Richard C.; Sjogren, Gus; Smith, Jack; Stone, George Laurie; Thomas, Arthur R.; Turnbull, Mrs. Martha; Watts, John E.; Wentzel, G. T.; Westfall, Clarence, V.; Whelan, Maurice; Zeibert, Fred.

MANUSCRIPTS UNCLAIMED

HASTLAR GAL BREATH; Ruth Gilfillan; Leo Hays; Jack P. Robinson; Ray Ozmer; Miss Jimmie Banks; O. B. Franklin; Cole Williams.

Please send us your present address. Mail forwarded to address given us does not reach you. Address—J. E. Cox, care *Adventure*.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

MID-APRIL ADVENTURE

Besides the four stories mentioned in the ad on page 2, the Mid-April number, in your hands on March 18th, will bring you the following seven red-blooded short stories:

THE MASK OF THE IRON FACE — *By Gordon Young*

Another tale of the early Californian days and *Colonel Sutherland*—a law in the lawless regions.

PROVIDENCE TAKES A HAND — *By Robert McBlair*

A thirsty Indian and a bottle of whisky—and after plying him with it all night, the white man thought he had won in the morning.

THE HOPELESS HAM — *By Russell A. Boggs*

A story of the railroad—and some incidents which were not on the regular schedule.

THE HOLE-CARD — *By Will Levinrew*

If you play stud-poker you are sure to enjoy this tale. If you don't understand the game, the story will teach you a lot.

WITCH-DOCTORS Part III — *By Charles Beadle*

THE STEER BRANDED M-U-R-D-E-R — *By Barry Scobee*

A tale of the cattle-country and a steer with the sinister brand "M-U-R-D-E-R," roaming, despised, from place to place.

TOWING OUT — *By Hugh S. Miller*

Adventure steps down anywhere. But you would hardly expect to find it aboard a little harbor-tug on a quiet Sunday.